Dalit Literature

A CRITICAL EXPLORATION

AMAR NATH PRASAD
M.B. GAIJAN

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Dalit Literature : A Critical Exploration is an anthology of critical research papers contributed by different scholars hailing from the different parts of India. It contains more than twenty scholarly papers dealing with the various aspects of Dalit Literature, e.g., Chokamela : the Poineer of Untouchable Movement in Maharashtra, the growth and evaluation of Dalit literature, Dalit Literary theory, Dalit feminism, Dalit poetry, distinctive voices of distress, outcaste in Tagore's poetry, the othered and unempowered in M.R. Anand, the Dalit sensibility in the writings of Jim Corbett, Gujarati Dalit poetry, reversing centrality and marginality, Gujarati Dalit poetry and its origin and development, short stories in Gujarati Dalit literature, Dalit in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things,* Narendra Jadhav's *Outcaste :* A memoir and the psychodynamics of women in *Shosh*, a Gujarati Dalit novel.

The book, it is hoped, will certainly slake the thirst of those teachers, research scholars and general readers who want to be more familiar with the various aspects of Dalit literature in India.

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DALIT LITERATURE
A Critical Exploration

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Edited by
Amar Nath Prasad
&
M.B. Gaijan

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TO

THOSE WHO STAND BY

THE DALITS

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Introduction

Pre-Aryan history of India tells us there was a highly civilized race in India. They were different in *Varna* or skin colour. We do not have the record in our known language to know about their social life, culture, customs etc. The scripts of that era are still mystery for the scholars. Thus that chapter remains unknown to us. What we know about Indian civilization we know through the Hindu scriptures, earlier known as the Aryan scriptures. They are Vedas, Upanishads, Samhitas, Smritis, Epics, Puranas and other works. The scriptures present that Non- Aryans were known as Dasa, Dasyu, fifth Varna, and later on Shudra, Ati-Shudra and Untouchables.

All ancient works remain gospels for Hindu society. They have presented the real socio-cultural and political picture of Hindu society of different era. The detailed study of the scriptures present that the one section of Hindu society—Shudra—was badly treated. Among Shudras, "*Nirvasita* were inhumanly treated". This section was pushed at the periphery of Hindu society and they were differently identified by insulting terms in different ages. They were mainly known as Untouchables. Touching to them was polluting, even their shadow was polluting to the orthodox Hindus. The human beings of these castes were/are inhumanly treated. As a matter of fact, Hindu spirituality preaches the message of equality among all livings. Hindu society did/does not follow the message of egalitarianism and universal brotherhood. Caste controls the society. As a result the Untouchables remained helpless sufferers in their hapless condition since the centuries. A few

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religious pioneers and saints have protested the cruelty committed on the oppressed people but their protest could not bring large scale change in the society.

Hindu society remains caste-divided community. Upper caste people look down on lower caste people. Untouchables were the section of the lowest castes in Indian society. Before independence the lowest castes were identified as the Scheduled Castés by the British Government. In the constitution of India they are accepted as Scheduled Castes. 19th century reformers raised their voice against injustice to the Scheduled castes. Jotirao Phule started the first school in Pune for the children of this section.

20th century remained the boon for the oppressed humanity all over the world. After the establishment of U.N.O., democratic political governing system was encouraged. India became Republic in 1950. Egalitarian message is materialized by the constitution of India. All are accepted as equal. The peripheral section tries to merge with main stream and also tries to reach at the centre.

Two great leaders, Dr. Ambedkar and Gandhiji dedicated to uplift the oppressed beings. Gandhiji did on the base of humanity. So Gandhian literature is the literature of sympathizers, based on humanity. Gandhiji addressed them as Harijans.

Dr. Ambedkar was the visionary reformer of modern India. He was from the oppressed class. He had the worst experiences of injustice and cruelty. He strongly protested all injustice done to Dalits. So Dr. Ambedkar becomes the ideal model for this section. He renamed the oppressed section as Dalit. His message "Get education, Be United, and Fight for Rights" brought tremendous change among the Dalits in a few years. Dalits are getting education. They come forward with their power of pen. They have started to write their sufferings in their own tongues, first in regional languages, then in international language. In various literary forms they used their hands. Their protest

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is not the revenge on the particular castes or section, but their fury is the strong demand of their existence as human beings and fellow citizens of Republic of India.

Dr. Ambedkar and Gandhiji both used two different terms "Dalit" and "Harijan" to uplift the oppressed citizens of India. Under the influence of both Dr. Ambedkar and Gandhiji the new literature was/is produced. This Dalit centered literature by both Dalits and Non-Dalits, is the new literary trend for the literary scholars at home and abroad. And for Dalits this literature is the document of their struggle for human identity, the identity as the citizens of the democratic India.

This book which contains more than twenty scholarly research papers deals with the various aspects of Dalit literature. The opening article by Dr. Darshana Trivedi critically examines the Dalit literary theory in Indian context. It also makes a very clear-cut difference between main stream literature and marginal literature, grand narrative and little narrative. Prof. B. S. Nimavat deals with the concept of Dalit and Dalit Literature through Chokhamela, the 13th-14th century Maharashtrian saint and the pioneer of the Untouchable movement in Maharashtra who used his *abhangas* to give voice to his feelings against untouchability.

Dr. S. K. Paul has explored and evaluated the growth and evaluation of Dalit Literature in a very lucid and interesting way. He is of the opinion that lack of real sincerity and commitment at the political level, incompetence, inefficiency, redtapism and worst of all these evils, corruption in the bureaucracy loom large over even the post-colonial India and though the political elite of the SCs and the government knows these behind-the-screen malpractices and grave corruption regarding the lives of the Dalits, they look like silent spectators. Dr. Anita Ghosh, in her scholarly paper critically analyses Dalit Feminism in the light of Psycho-social description of the Dalit. She thinks that brutal patriarchy within Dalit communities is one issue which repeatedly appears in Dalit feminist discourse.

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D. Padmarani raises in her scholarly paper the voices of the distress in the light of the age-old rites and customs. She observes that the term Dalit encompasses the hapless segment of India: the Untouchable communities, Adivasis, Nomadic tribes and the suffering masses who were made to lead dehumanized, degraded lives.

Dr. M. B. Gaijan evaluates the outcaste in the poetry of Rabindranath Tagore. He shows that Tagore has typically poeticized the stories on outcaste with a view to accepting the insulted as fellow human beings. Dr. Sunita Sinha, in her research paper, "The Othered and Unempowered in Mulk Raj Anand"—explores the novels of M. R. Anand. She compares Anand to Zola and Balzac and thinks that Anand emerges on the scene of Indo-Anglian English literature, as a crusader against social exploitation.

The quest for life and research for the individual identity are the central theme of M. R. Anand's novels. His heroes, the downtrodden don't suffer from tragic flaws, but they are the victims of the society and their destinies are determined by heredity. This is what T. S. Ramesh evaluates in his paper "Quest for Disentanglement". Dr. S. S. Bhandari has critically shown Jim Corbett's well-known book "My India" which is dedicated to the poor and the deserted people of India. In this book Corbett has extolled, as Dr. Bhandari says, the large segment of Indian society called 'Depressed' or Dalits'.

Dr. Pathak Paramar has critically analysed the Gujarati Dalit poetry in a very exhaustive and comprehensive way. He observes that the poetry of Dalit literature is abundant with the suppressed voice of the Dalits, their self-experiences of injustice and atrocities, their furious expression on the Brahminical traditions etc. He has quoted abundatly a number of quotations from the leading books of Dalit literature.

Dr. Rupalee Burke, in her scholarly observation, divides her research paper into three sections. Section-I traces the trajectory of both Gujarati Dalit literature and Gujarati

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literature and examines how Gujarati Dalit literature is an 'anti caste' literary movement, an ideological discourse that runs counter to the aesthetics of Gujarati Dalit literature. Section II examines how Gujarati Dalit literature is an important aspect in the process of identity formation of the Dalits and the deserted in Gujarat. The last section takes stock of how Gujarat Dalit literature has successfully established its separate and distinct identity. Harish Manglam presents an in-depth study of the Gujarati' Dalit poetry and its origin and development. He is of the opinion that the mood of Dalit literature today is not like the gentle breeze of spring, but a mid-summer cyclone. Most of the poems belong to a battle field, one where there is a battle for the social justice of Dalits.

Dushyant Nimavat and Ami Upadhayay have critically shown the Gujarati Dalit literature and short-stories. They give as a bird's eye view of Dalit novels, poems, short stories, periodicals and other forms of Dalit literature. They have quoted extensively some important quotations including Dr. B. R. Ambedkar. Dr. M. B. Gaijan, in another scholarly paper on Arundhati Roy's debut novel *The God of Small Things* says that Arundhati Roy has portrayed the socio-political realism of democratic India, where still one community is becoming the victim of the brutality of the majority and the flatterers of the majority. The Ayemenem incident of killing Velutha is the microscopic vision of the orthodoxy's brutality against Dalits. Dr. Gaijan is of the opinion that in India plenty of legal protections are only on the papers. It would not change the miserable conditions of the Dalit unless the social attitude is changed. If the Indian society would accept them, they wouldn't remain untouchable, socially and culturally.

Dr. Shibu Simon and Mr. Sijo Varghese have expressed their critical views about the silence of the marginalized and the oppressed. They have also dealt with subalternity and gender discrimination, Dalit feminism and the representations of subalterns in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*. They observe that Roy's novel explores how the

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Parayas and Pulayas have lost all their benefits of reservation in the name of caste. Even after independence, the marginalization of the Dalits still continues to hold its prominent place in the society. Though the Dalits are naturally gifted people who can excel in different fields, but the societal caste system doesn't allow them to do so.

Dr. Amar Nath Prasad's critical research paper "Pity and Plight of the Dalit and the Defenceless in "The God of Small Things" evaluates the sufferings and suffocations of the 'Mombatties' of not only *The God of Small Things* but also of her other two books *The End of Imagination* and *The Greater Common Good.* The paper shows that God never makes any difference between a touchable and an untouchable; between the poor and the rich; between the rough and the sublime. The thing which is needed is to appreciate the discarded and the abandoned. The obscure living of the poor can't be condemned; they are the significant competent of the nation in the sense that they work honestly in the fields. The economy of the nation cannot remain in its key without the co-operation of the Dalit and the down-trodden.

Satish Barbuddhe shows critically and analytically Narendra Jadhav's book, *Outcaste: A Memoir,* a wonderful narrative. In this book Narendra Jadhav thinks that we should not deprive the children of opportunities at the higher education level. He also believes in the maxim "Do not wait to strike until the iron is not but make it hot by striking". M. B. Gaijan, in his scholarly paper "Gujarati Dalit Novel *Shosh*: A Study in Connection with Psychodynamics of Women" deals with the novel *Shosh* by Daxa Damodara, a young Dalit writer. This novel is her first novel and the first Dalit novel by a Dalit woman author. About the book, Dr. Gaijan holds the view: "The novel is poetry in prose. The style is musical, words carry apt and appropriate picture of Madhavi's mind. It also brings live picture of Kutch before the eyes of readers. The work is not only piece of art but it helps to understand woman's mind for better harmony of family and then society".

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The book saw the light of the day after the invaluable co-operation of a number of people, particularly all the contributors of this book who had to burn their mid-night lamps to contribute their scholarly research papers. We are also very thankful to Prof. Jagdish Chandra Dave, Principal, Dr. A. A. Shaikh, Mr. Bhargav Jani, Harish Manglam, Dr. Pathik Paramar, Dalapat Chauhan, Daxa Damodara, Dr. Rupalee Burke, Dr. Shibu Simon, S. Barbudhe and all our well-wishers for their valuable suggestions and encouragements. The loving smile of the kids—Mrunali, Minki and Rahul also played an important role for making this hard and tedious work of editing simple.

Last but not the least our special thanks go to Mr. P. K. Sharma, the Managing Director, Sarup & Sons Publishers, New Delhi who published the book so good and attractive.

Editors

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1

Literature of their Own: Dalit Literary Theory in Indian Context

— *Darshana Trivedi*

I reject your culture

I reject your Parmeshwar centred tradition

I reject your religion based literature.

(Marathi Dalit Poem)

The roots of the term 'Dalit' can be traced back to the Purusukta of *Rig Veda* where we find the first reference of the caste system. The hymn describes;

Brahmnoasaya mukhamasit

Bahu rajanayah kruta

Uru Tadasay Yadvaishya

Padabhayam Sudro ajayat.

(X 90-12)

According to this hymn, Brahmna's were born from the mouth of Brahma, the Kshatriyas from his shoulders, the Vaisayas from his thighs and Sudras from his feet. Hence Brahmanas are the most superior and Sudras are the most inferior in the hierarchy. The Brahmins have established the theories that the caste system is God-made and not man-made. In the subsequent ages, Manu, an ardent supporter of the caste system made it a code in his *Manusmriti*. The division on the basis of class is a universal

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phenomena, but the characteristic of Hindu caste system is that it is based on birth and not on aptitude. Because of the rigidity of the caste system, Sudras are considered outcastes down-trodden, polluted, marginals and are exploited by the higher castes since centuries.

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar, the father of Dalit Movement rejected the notion that caste system is God made. He, along with Mahatama Phule, started a political movement for the freedom and equality of Dalits. This movement played a very significant role as a shaping spirit of Dalit Literature. The purpose of this movement was to create a new space for Dalits. They were not satisfied with the political and economic equality given by the government as a token of centuries of sufferings. They also demanded religious and creative equality. They rejected all role models, traditional literature, Eastern and Western critical theories and decided to create a literature of their own, an identity of their own.

Various Opinions about the term Dalit and Dalit Literature

Marathi dictionary defines the term Dalit as 1. Ground 2. Broken or reduced to pieces generally. The clearest definition of Dalit in contemporary usage has been given by Gangadhar Pantwane, a professor of Marathi and founder editor of **Asmitadarsh.** He says:

> To me, Dalit is not a caste
> He is a man exploited by
> the Social and economic
> traditions of this country.
> He does not believe in God,
> Rebirth, Soul, Holy books teaching
> separatism, Fate and Heaven
> because they have made him
> a slave. He does believe in

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> humanism. Dalit is a symbol
>
> of change and revolution.[2]

This remark of Pantwane suggests that Dalits reject the main stream tradition, and for Dalit Literature low caste man and their sufferings are of prime importance. Baburao Bagul, a well known Dalit short story writer says:

> Dalit literature is not a Literature of Vengeance. Dalit Sahitya is not a literature which spreads hatred. Dalit Sahitya-first promotes man's greatness and man's freedom and for that reason it is an historic necessity.[3]

Arjun Dangle, the editor of *Poisoned Bread,* a collection of Dalit writings writes:

> Dalit Literature is not simply literature, it is associated with a movement to bring about change. It represents the hopes and ambitions of a new society and new people.[4]

All these observations about Dalit Literature clearly establish the fact that Dalit literature has a separate identity from main stream literature.

II

Main Stream Literature Vs Marginal Literature

In 1969 Diwali issue of *Marathawada* Dr. Wankhade Baburao Bagul rejected the main stream literary tradition. The main stream literary tradition is based on Varnas and Varnashramas. Any brahminic text begins with the depiction of Dharma and ends with moksha or salvation. The story of kings and queens and the glorification of their lives is the main theme of main stream literature. The ordinary man from the lower classes is out of picture and his life experiences and feelings are never the subject of art. Critics hail the tragedy of an intellectual artist rather than a mediocre man. As against this marginal literature including feminist and Black literatures express the harsh and stark

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brutality of personal experiences. The problem of untouchability is discussed by Shankarrao Kharat in 'The Burden' where a Mahar Kotwal refuses to help an educated Mahar who has returned to the village saying. "You felt my pain and that is why you held the umbrella over my head in this soaking rain. It's all very well. You may hold the umbrella over my head now. But what about tomorrow. Rain is there. Heat is there. The burden on the head is always there. Yes, In "The Town Crier's Call", the Mahar Village servant has to go out to drum and announce the need for all villagers to come to be inoculated by the visiting doctor, even though he himself is so sick, he falls, vomits and dies as he attempts to shout and drum. These examples clarify that Dalit Literature is neither an ideal representation of life nor an individual commitment, but a social commitment.

The city world of Dalits is the most cruel in Namdeo Dhasal's poetry. Vijay Tendulkar, the well known Marathi dramatist while introducing Dhasal's *Golpitha* writes:

> In the calculations of the white collar workers, "No man's land" begins at the border of their world, and it is here that the world of Namdeo Dhasal's poetry of Bombay begins. Mercy, grace, peace do not touch Golpitha; Dhasal says, here all seasons are pitiless, here all seasons have a contrary heart.[5]

The hopes and aspirations of the exploited masses, the problem of untouchability, the exploitation of Dalit women by higher caste men, are the themes of Dalit literature. The aim of Dalit writers is to expose the evil of caste system and injustice done to them by higher caste. The Dalit writers write what they see, feel and think in the social environment.

Grand Narrative Vs. Little Narrative

Main stream literature uses metaphysical, philosophical, symbolic and imaginative language. The

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main stream writers are interested in the depiction of physical beauty and the heroic qualities of their characters, hence their language is complex and far from reality. To them *Vachayartha* (the apparent meaning of the text) is not important but *Lakshna* i.e. metaphorical meaning of the text is important. They talk about the God-man relationship or man nature relationship in a poetic way. For example, Rabindranath Tagore talks about the God-man relationship in the most poetic manner. He says:

> Every moment and every age,
> every day and every night
> He comes, comes, ever comes.

(XLV Gitanjali)

Dalit writers express their experiences in the most realistic way by using their native speech. Their language as well as images come from their own experiences instead of from their observation of nature. The language of main stream literature presents the romantic view of life, while Dalit Poetry represents the realistic view of life. T.S. Eliot's theory of objective correlative or experimental use of myth and allusions is not found in Dalit Poetry. Dr. Mahesh Pandya's Gujarati poem, "Uttar Gujarat ni Jivali" is one of the best illustrations of the language of Dalit poetry.

> Let us go to the village
> O Jamni
> I want to buy a gun
> gun ? why Jivali ?
> are you mad ?
> Why do you need a gun ?
> Ali Jamni, you do not know
> Poor Shambuk
> was meditating and practicing vedas
> And then?
> Rama killed him mercilessly

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Now
I want to shoot Rama
and also
I want to kill Drona
who demanded
Eklavya's thumb as
Gurudakshina. [6]

Dalit Aesthetics

Ideal Vs Real

Since Dalit literature rejects cannonical literature, it also rejects the established standards of evaluating literature i.e. the aesthetics. The purpose of traditional literature is to provide aesthetic pleasure i.e. "*brahmanand-sahodarananda*". Though traditional aesthetics talk about three basic principles of literature, *Satya* (truth), *Shivam* (goodness) and *Sundaram* (beauty), it is never realistic. On the contrary, Dalit literature is based on reality and for it man is superior even to God or the nation. Hence when we evaluate Dalit text we can neither apply Bharata's concept of *Nayaka Dhirodat, Dhirlalit. Dhir Prasant* or *Dhiruddat,* nor can we apply Jagannath's definition of poetry "*Vakyam rasatamkam Kavayam*". Dalit literature rejects Western theories like Freud's Psychoanalysis, Barthe's structuralism or Derrida's deconstruction theory, it also rejects Indian theories of rasa and Dhawni. Dr. C.B. Bharti in his Hindi article, "The Aesthetics of Dalit Literature" talks about Dalit aesthetics. He writes :

> The aim of Dalit literature is to protest against the established system which is based on injustice and to expose the evil and hypocrisy of the higher castes. There is an urgent need to create a separate aesthetics for Dalit literature, an aesthetics based on the real experiences of life.[7]

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We can not evaluate the beauty of Dalit woman by keeping Shakuntala's concept in mind (*Kimiv hi madhuranam hi mandanakrutum*) The beauty of Dalit women lies in the web of perspiration on her face while she works in the field.

III

Future of Dalit Literature

Arjun Dangle in his article "Past Present and Future of Dalit Literature" writes:

> The creation of Dalit literature is inevitable until the structure of society changes and as long as exploitation exists.[8]

Till date we have Dalit poetry, short stories and autobiographies but the field of drama is yet neglected. In the coming years Dalit literature has to create its own myth and develop Dalit theatre to cross the boundaries of national literature and has to create a space in world literature. Like Black literature, it must be every man's literature. Black literature talks about the sufferings and pains of Negroes. From the personal sufferings, Black literature raises to universal literature in the writings of Toni Morrison, Maya Angello and Alice Walker. As Gautam Buddha said "*Atma Deepo Bhava*" (Be your own light).

Conclusion

Dalit Literature is a journey from main stream literature to marginal literature, from grand narrative to little narrative, from individual identity to group identity, from ideal to real, from vertical literature to spiral literature, from self-justification to self-affirmation. This is the "celebration of difference".

NOTES

1. V.L. Kalekar, quoted in Barbara Joshi, *Untouchable : Voice of the Dalit Liberation Movement* (New Delhi; Select Book, 1986) Page 83.

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2 "Dalit: New cultural context of an old, Marathi Word" *Contributions to Asian Studies,* XI, 1977-78.

3. Baburao, Bagul, "Dalit Sahitya : man's greatness, man's freedom" *Asmitadarsh,* Vol. I, 1973, 56-57.

4. Arjun, Dangle, ed. *Poisoned Bread,* Translations from Modern Marathi Dalit Literature (Mumbai : Orient Longman, 1992) p. 266.

5. Namdeo Dhasal, *Golpitha* (Poona : Nilkant Prakashan, 1975).

6. Mahesh Pandya, "Uttar Gujaratni Jiwali, *Hayati* (Ahmedabad: Gujarat Dalit Sahitya Academy), July 1999. 6. (originally written in Gujarati, translated by me).

7. C.B. Bharti, "The aesthetics of Dalit Literature," *Hyati,* June 1999. (Translated by me).

8. Arjun Dangle, op. cit., p. 266.

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2

Chokhamela : The Pioneer of Untouchable Movement in Maharashtra

—Prof. B.S. Nimavat

Prof Gangadhar Pantawane, the professor of Marathi at Marathawada University at Aurangabad and founder editor of "Asmitadarsh" (mirror of identity) defines Dalit in the following words:

> "To me, Dalit is not a Caste. He is a man exploited by the social and economic traditions of the country. He does not believe in God, Rebirth, Soul, Holy Books teaching separatism, fate and Heaven because they have made him a slave. He does believe in humanism. Dalit is a symbol of change and revolution."

The key point is a radical rejection of religions, legitimization of poverty and untouchability. Dalit literature has been influenced by Marxism and also by the American Black Movement. It has also been influenced by Buddhism. Namdev Dhasal combines Buddhism and Marxism. However, the roots of the Dalit literature and the Dalit movement lie more profoundly in the Mahar Movement and the Buddhism revival. Dr. Ambedkar distrusted Marxists and called them 'a bunch of Brahman boys." He firmly held that Buddhism contained all the economic and social help necessary for the Dalits.

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Though the Dalit literature is comparatively a modern phenomenon inspired by Buddhist ideology, Marxism and the Mahar Movement, the Bhakti-movement in Maharashtra certainly contains the seeds of protest against untouchability and exploitation of the oppressed.

Chokhamela was a 13th-14th century Maharashtrian saint in the Bhakti tradition. Chokhamela and Eknath (16th century) are revered figures in *Warkari Sampradaya* (Tradition of Pilgrims). *Warkari Sampradaya* is connected with the tradition of pilgrimage to Pandharpur, the holy temple of Vithoba. The lives of both Chokhamela and Eknath are enveloped into legends and their songs are sung by devotees on the pilgrimage to Pandharpur and in bhajan sessions. Chokhamela was a Mahar, the only important Bhakti figure in Maharashtra. Eknath, on the other hand, was a Brahmin from the holy city of Paithan. He wrote about Chokhamela, ate with Mahars and allowed the Untouchables to attend and sing at his bhajan sessions. He also wrote poems in the persons of a Mahar with more spirituality and wisdom than the Brahmins.

Both Chokhamela and Eknath offer models for protests against untouchability. Chokhamela who was untouchable himself achieved a respected place among the saints of the Maharashtra. Eknath, a Brahman by caste chose to equate himself with the Mahars. He showed through his words and actions that there was equality among the true devotees of God.

Chokhamela was born in the second half of the 13th century. He and his family followed the traditional village duties of the Mahar of Maharashtra. There are legends regarding his birth which shows that he was born out of grace of Lord Vithal. There is also a legend about his death. Chokhamela and other Mahars were called to repair the wall. While they were working at it, the wall fell burying them. Namdev, a famous Bhakti saint from tailor community went to village and claimed Chokhamela's body. He found that the bones of the dead Chokhamela's

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murmured '*Vitthal, Vitthal*'. He took them to Pandharpur and buried them near the steps of the temple.

Chokhamela carried out the traditional work of Mahar very obediently never complaining against it, but there are references to his lowly caste and the meaningless imposition of such title on him and the Mahar people. His *abhangs* are mainly highly devotional poems expressing his deep devotion and love for Lord Vitthal. They reveal his deep piety and sense of resignation as a true *bhakta* but there are some suggestions of protest against untouchability here and there. Let us quote some of such verses.

In Abhanga 76, he says,

> "O god, my caste is low; how can I serve you?
>
> Everyone tells me to go away: how can I see you?
>
> When I touch anyone, they take offence.
>
> Chokhamela wants your mercy."

Though the above-mentioned *abhanga* expresses his acceptance of low caste, there is a palpable tinge of complaint. In *Abhanga* 11, he is quite explicit in his philosophy of the polluted and the non-polluted. He says,

> "The only impurity is in the fire elements.
>
> There is only one substance in the world.
>
> Then who is pure and who is impure?
>
> The cause of pollution is the creation of the body.
>
> In the beginning, at the end, there is nothing but pollution.
>
> No one knows anyone who was born pure,
>
> Chokha says, in wonder, who is pure?"

One *abhanga* relates a legend about Chokhamela. Once, Chokhamela was rejected entry into the temple of Vithoba. He was sitting on the bank of the Bhima river. Vitthal himself comes to comfort him and Chokhamela offers him curd. A priest followed Chokhamela overheard him addressing his companion as Vitthal. The priest slapped him on the face of Chokhamela's companion. (Lord

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Vitthal) The priest on returning to the temple found the image of Lord Vitthal with a swollen cheek and card split on his clothes. In this *abhanga* that refers to two legend, Chokhamela uses the symbols of his Maharness to reinforce the idea of his deep devotion for Vithoba. Chokhamela even uses the customary right of the Mahar to receive any discarded food as a way to worship Lord Vitthal. He also uses the customary address of a Mahar to the superior 'johar' as a salutation to Vitthal.

Even though he accepts his lowly caste and Maharness with the sense of stoical resignation, he is fully convinced that for his worldly fellowmen, he might be untouchable but for God, he is His beloved. The defect of the body, lowliness of the caste are all external things. Even the ugly, the deformed and outwardly rejected can be holy and lovable to God. In *Abhanga* 52, he says,

> "Cane is crooked, but its juice is not crooked,
> Why be fooled by outward appearance ?
> The bow is crooked, but the arrow is not crooked
> Why be fooled by outward appearance?
> The river is twisting, but its water is not crooked,
> Why be fooled by outward appearance?
> Chokha is ugly but his feelings aren't ugly,
> Why be fooled by outward appearance?"

It is true that though Chokhamela used his *abhangas* to give voice to his feelings against untouchability, his protest is subdued and overshadowed by his devotion for Lord Vitthal. He probably has accepted the limitations of his caste but the essence of the entire body of the *abhangas* is that people rejected Mahars as untouchables but God embraced Chokhamela with love. This very idea expresses the rejection of untouchability.

The growth of nationalism and interest in Bhakti movement of Maharashtra certainly helped in bringing about the awakening and reformation in Maharashtra and

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India at large. Mahadeo Govind Rahade, the member of the reformist group, the Prarthana Samaj wrote about the historic importance of the Bhakti movement. He said,

> "... like the Protestant Reformation in Europe in the sixth century, there was a religion, Social and Literary Revival and Reformation in India, but notably in the Deccan in 15th and 16th centuries. This Religion Revival was not Brahamanical in its orthodoxy; it was heterodox in its spirit of protest against form and ceremonies and class distinction based on birth, and ethical in its preference of a pure heart, and of the law of love, to all other acquired merits and good works. The Regions Revival was the work also of the people, of the masses, and not of the classes. At its head were saints and prophets, Poets and Philosophers, who sprang chiefly from the lower orders of society – tailors, carpenters, potters, gardeners, shop-keepers, barbers and even mahars – move often than Brahmans." (M.G. Ranade, Rise of the Marathi Power and Other Essays, Bombay, p. 5).

R.D. Ranade in his book '*Pathways to God in Marathi Literature*' states the popular impression that Bhakti movement helped in driving home the truth that in the eyes of God, all people are equal. He writes:

> "The gates of the Bhakti school were open whoever entered was hailed as a brother - nay more – was honoured as a saint... All separatism tendencies vanished... all were equal.... For five successive centuries, Maharashtra was the abode of the noblest and trust all Democracies, the Democracy of the Bhakti school."

It must be acknowledged that the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra called for the spirit of equality and brotherhood. The Ex-chief Justice of the supreme P.B.

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Gajendragadkar once said that the Bhakti movement in Maharashtra had played a very important role in bringing about equality and brotherhood. Chokhamela, the great Mahar saint poet was one of such poets who through his devotional poems propagated the message of love for all, equality and brotherhood. C.B. Agarwal in "*The Harijans in Rebellion*" remarked,

> "One of the greatest reformers in Maharashtra was saint' Dnaneshwar. He opened the gates of *Vedic spiritualism* to the Hindu masses including the Harijans. We have only to read the writings of Chokhamela, the Untouchable saint and follower of Dnaneshwar, to get an idea of the tremendous joy he felt... Certainly those persons who Dnaneshwar thought good enough to share our spiritual heritage cannot be unworthy of our touch."

Kisan Fagu Bansode, one of the early leaders of the Maharas in Vidarbh area made pilgrimage to Pandharpur and collected Abhangas of Chokhamela. He wrote a play on the life of Chokhamela. In one such poem, he invokes the image of Chokhamela very poignantly.

> "Why do you endear curses ?
> Chokha went into the temple resolutely,
> Why do you, ashamed, stay far off ?
> You are the descendants of Chokha.
> Why do you fear to enter the temple ?
> Brace yourself like wrestler, come,
> Together let us conquer pollution.

However, Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar did not approve of the role of Bhakti-movement in removing untouchability. He had more faith in political means to raise the status of the untouchable than with religious means. In 1949, Dr. Ambedkar presided over a meeting at Trymbak, which discussed the buildings of a temple on the name of

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Chokhamela. The meeting ended with a resolution that, "a real memorial consisted in devoting themselves with unflagging energy to the removal of the blot of untouchabliity" (Dhananjay Keer, *Dr Ambedkar: Life and Mission*, Popular Prakashan, Bombay P. 126).

In 1932, Dr. Ambedkar elaborated on the uselessness of religious piety in very strong terms:

> "The appearance of Tulsi leaves around your neck will not relieve you from the clutches of the money lenders. Because you sing songs of Rama, you will not get a concession in rent from the landlords. You will not get salaries at the end of the month because you make pilgrimage every year to Pandharpur (Ibid).

In 1956, Dr. Ambedkar converted to Buddhism followed by other three million people in next few months.

Chokhamela found joy in equality with other *bhaktas* and in the eyes of God. The new generation of untouchables wanted political equality and equal social status with other people. Buddhism offered justification that it is mind and action that should be the criteria for judging a man and not birth. Dr. Ambedkar and his followers found Buddhist philosophy appropriate for their ideology. However, Chokhamela remains one of the earliest saint poets who advocated equality and brotherhood.

At present, the doors of Pandharpur are open to all. Sane Guruji, a great Brahman socialist became instrumental in opening the doors of the temple of Vithoba for all. He set fasting in the temple doorway to get the temple doors opened for all. The Samadhi of Chokhamela marks his burial place at the foot of the temple stairs. Though Chokhamela's abhangas have lost their appeal for Buddhism–converted untouchables, his contribution to highlight the plights of the untouchables and his propagation of equality and brotherhood cannot be underestimated and must not remain unacknowledged.

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3

Dalitism : Its Growth and Evaluation

—Dr. S.K. Paul

Caste based society is immobile. If a Chamar gets higher official position in the society, he will be still known as Chamar in this society. He cannot fully adopt Brahmin's way of life. He can pretend to be a Brahmin only. He cannot perform spiritual functions. The majority will never regard him as a Brahmin even if he does.

There are several theories explaining the rise, growth and sustenance of caste system. The Divine Plan theory, Racial Antipathy theory, Occupational or functional theory, etc. exist still in our Indian society. A "caste" is not a class. Caste is something more than a class (60). The caste structure is not based on economy or wealth. Economy does not determine social ranking in caste system. It is the caste which determines individual's social position in the social hierarchy. The second aspect which distinguishes caste from class system is the ascriptive nature of the social status which the individual acquires and which could not be improved or changed. Dalits are members of the Scheduled Castes and Tribes, neo-Buddhists, the working people, the landless and poor peasants, women and all those who are being exploited politicaliy, economically and in the name of religion.

Study to find out about anti-caste legislation in 52 villages in all 16 districts of Karnataka, 941 total

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respondents, 50 per cent being SCs (6-7). Awareness among SCs of lower rank is extremely low. Constitutional guarantee is unknown to 96 per cent of the respondents, Untouchability (Offenses) Act is not known to 86 per cent (16). Sources quoted by respondents include informal sources like social activists, social conflicts, and friends. Formal sources of communication are virtually out of reach.

Excepting in the case of political activities, in all the remaining areas of social interactions, untouchability is practised as admitted by a vast majority of respondents. As high as 80 per cent say those hotels are still barred for them. Seventy-seven per cent say temples are barred for them and an equal number say they are not allowed to participate in religious processions. SCs are not allowed to take their processions in the caste Hindu areas.

Tank water is still a taboo, according to 68 per cent, similarly tap water is also not allowed (35). 70 per cent say no social mixing is allowed (with caste Hindus). This was particularly so in the case of women (with caste Hindu women).

The study shows that the practice of untouchability has not vanished completely but it is declining. One-third of the respondents have reported that the practice still continues in matter of water collection. The prevailing situation about water collection is indicative of a declining trend.

It could be said that there is no commensality in the sense it is understood but at the same time it cannot be denied that the traditional rigidity also does not exist. Discrimination in hotels and restaurants is generally not practiced.

There does exist discrimination of one kind or the other as far as entry of SCs into temples is concerned. The rural respondents have reported about discrimination of one kind or the other. Brahmins are not prepared to perform religious and ritual functions for SCs.. In education, whatever discrimination still exists, it is confined to rural

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areas. In market places discrimination appears to be vanishing. SCs are allowed to enter the shops. Rural respondents said that SCs would not be hired at caste Hindu shops. No discrimination exists in medical services. Barbers and tailors do make discrimination in rural areas. In terms of interactions, caste Hindus do not reciprocate invitations to dinner, visits during festivals, funerals, etc., to SC homes, especially in rural areas.

After the coming of the Aryans we have better linguistic and literary evidence, though it has to be cautiously analyzed. The Aryan advent cannot be simply understood as a conquest over equalitarian indigenous peoples who give rise to the caste system. Nevertheless, 'Aryans' and 'conquest' did play a role. The Indo-Europeans were a patrilineal people, in contrast to local matrilineal traditions, through their patriarchy, tribal and statistic gave certain freedom to women. Once, however, they absorbed the notions of 'sacred power' and 'danger' associated with women and low castes in the Dravidian tradition, the resulting patriarchal synthesis in the context of group conflict was far more complete and violent in the control of women.

Similarly, the tribal or lineage inequalities that intensified among Vedic people as they spread throughout India were not really 'caste-like', but once they absorbed the 'proto-caste' features among the indigenous culture and various groups fought for dominance of the system, a caste hierarchy developed. Chaturvarnya did not actually describe existing social groups, but was rather an ideology overlaying the very different processes of transformation of 'proto-caste' tribal groups into jatis. In this Brahmans played a key role - Brahmans who derived both ethnically and culturally from indigenous as well as Aryan priestly groups, but who identified with the Aryans as they sought to legitimize and extend the total system of dominance and exploitation associated with caste in a period of developing production, surpluses and economic inequalities.

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With the period of the rise of the state in the Gangetic valley in the middle of the first millennium BC caste inequalities appear as more crystallized and began to get the stamp of legitimacy with the development of Brahmanic Hinduism, symbolized finally in the laws of Manu. In these, extreme forms of the subordination of women and Sudgras were sanctioned, and Brahmans claimed superiority at the top of a hierarchy of purity-pollution and occupational specialization.

The long interregnum of a thousand years between the emergence of the first states in the Gangetic valley and the consolidation of the Brahmanic-Hindu social order suggests that the identification of 'Indian' culture with 'Hinduism' is badly mistaken, that the dominance of Hinduism was not so easily achieved and perhaps not inevitable, and that elements of revolt and opposition remained strong from the beginning.

In India, a few sociological studies have so far been produced on Harijans. Frequent references to SCs may be traced to over a period of a hundred years or more before Independence. However, as Sachchidananda puts it that it is only in the beginning of the Twentieth century that we got more detailed studies of Scheduled Castes in the form of Monographs. Some information about their way of life styles, habits and culture are sporadically recorded in Government official records. Some of the authors like Rdgar Thurston (1975), Briggs (1920), Shephen Fuchs (1949), Trivedi (1976), Vidyarthi (1977), etc., have recorded certain characteristic features on the social, economic, political and religious features of Harijans. After Independence, a few publication have been brought out mainly by sociologists like Lynch Owens (1969), Sachchidananda (1976), etc. Significant studies on the Mala are very few. Singh's book (1969) is noteworthy as the first of its kind in India which has made a detailed study of Madiga in the Telangana region (AP) (11). Vidyarthi and Mishra (1977) deal with Harijans from two zones in Bihar. Khan (1980) studies SCs

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in Banglalore district. Moffatt (1979) makes a detailed study of untouchables in a rural setting of Tamil Nadu. Desai (1973) studies untouchability in 69 rural villages of Gujarat, including among untouchables themselves.

M. S. Murthy (1971) is himself a Harijan. Trivedi (1976) deals with the immoral traffic in human flesh, undertaken in three regions: Bijapur, Raipur (MP) and Uttar Kashi (UP). C. Paravathamma (1984) gives some account of the fraustration prevalent among the SCs in the post-Independent India. She has discovered a big gulf between the SC politician, the educated, and the common man. Most of the educated Harijans get government jobs and are alienated from their own people. Viswanatham and Reddy (1985) have made an explorative attempt to find out the determinants of educational achievement among Scheduled Castes. Most specifically, they have examined whether or not there are class wise variations among them with respect to educational achievement. Their research study is based on the assumption that the SCs are no longer a homogeneous community and that there are perceptive differences among them with respect to class, status and power, parental attitude and its perception as a valuable channel of upward social mobility, availability of tradition of education and the existence of education oriented sub-culture. D. Venkateswarlu (1990) makes a different study about the conflicts between the Harijans and the Upper castes. He observes that there is a new level of awareness and consciousness among them that has not only enhanced their aspirations and ambitions but also made them assertive. This is not tolerated by the socially and economically dominant among the caste Hindus. There, a situation of conflict develops when the Harjans wish to realize their aspirations or assert their rights which the dominant among caste Hindus do not concede. Such a conflict is treated at the psychological level and also at the manifest level. The various aspects of both levels of conflict are discussed in detail.

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The Malas live on the out-skirts of the village in clusters of tiny cone-shaped and square-shaped thatched houses known as "Mala-wada." These wadas have their own wells, pumpsets, and temples. They are not allowed to draw water from public wells in the villages... Or to enter the main temples and worship along with other Hindu castes. People belonging to higher castes like the Brahmins, the Vaishyas and the Shudras do not accept cooked food or water from these people.

The Malas have four sub-castes: Pokanati, Reddybhumula, Arwa and Savu Malas. The four subcastes do not pollute with one another by their physical touch. Many of the Malas practise uncle-niece and cross-cousin marriages (:34). In some villages, the Tamil Malas cannot eat from the houses of Telugu Malas. But both groups draw water from the same well. Marriages are practised within the sub-division only. The researcher did not come across a single instance of inter-sub-caste marriage. The reason is the prevailing strong superiority and inferiority feelings between the divisions. Now-a-days, all Malas sit and dine together in hotels but not in their homes.

Caste restrictions have different meanings for different economic and caste groups. The ideology that the poor, so-called 'lower' caste groups were 'polluting' to the rich, so-called 'upper' caste groups was used by the privileged sections in order to maintain the status quo, build private property within their group, to control the bodies of their females, exploit the poor further, etc. The ideology of pollution among lower caste groups were related to several factors: (1) differential power relations vis-a-vis the dominant 'upper' castes and the desire of vulnerable groups to maintain their precarious, always shifting, status and position (however low) vis-a-vis other 'lower' castes. This implied the adoption of upper caste restrictions of eating and marriage to those within one sub-caste only; (2) given their perpetual poverty, the ideology of food taboos could have evolved out of an environmental necessity to conserve

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precious food resources to one's family, and extended kin or sub-caste only. Economic sensibility of feasting only those who are superior in wealth and status and who may therefore benefit the host in some way rather than share one's very limited wealth and food with those whom one could benefit little from, the other poor low castes.

Caste and class are viewed as the two most significant dimensions of social stratification. They are considered as closely interrelated, almost inseparable, basic processes of social life. It is one thing that caste is viewed as a sole model for analyzing Indian society or class is used for analyzing caste and power, but it is quite different in real life as caste and class are not only highly differentiated internally, complexities of their expression and articulation signify the vast ramifications of structured social inequality.

Debate on caste and class has covered wide-ranging issues related to indicators of status, levels of equality and inequality, cultural and structural interaction, occupational mobility, etc. Conceptual schemes to analyze these issues highlight structural versus attributional, and corporate versus individual dimensions regarding the nature of caste and class in India as systems of social stratification.

The caste-class divide was never as rigid as reported in various writings, and hence Indian society was also not as rigidly structured as depicted in several accounts of the caste system (:1). The 'ideal' and 'actual' status was never the same. Inter-caste marriages produced 'mixed-castes'. Contradictions within the caste system and influence of external forces of change on it rule our possibility of it being homo hierarchicus. A long history of discontinuities, break downs, contradictions and changes in the nature of the caste system also negate its absolutist, unchanging and holistic nature.

Both inequality and equality have been built into the ideology and practice of the caste system, and change has taken place in both as well as in the nexus between the two. ...Despite the priestly superiority of Brahmins over all other

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castes, the functionary lower castes enjoyed some 'ritual status,' certainly not comparable in any way with that of Brahmins. The status and the protection accorded to them by the caste panchayats enabled them to protest against the injustices meted out by the upper caste patrons. Hence, a critical re-examination of caste as a system of ideas and rituals, and class as a system of relations between the rich and poor may be necessary. The essays incorporated in this volume are largely addressed to this issue.

Caste and Land in Colonial South India by A. Nagaraja Naidu highlights that in the colonial period, in South India, the lower castes were Dalits and perceived the upper caste landlords as their enemy and not the British as the latter were not directly exploiting them (:15-16). The upper castes, being the early beneficiaries of education, first entered into the British revenue administration and later became entrenched in politics. They were nominated to the legislative council representing the landed aristocracy. In such a situation 'freedom' for the country had hardly any meaning for the dalits. In *Caste and Class in Rural Andhra: A Historical Perspective*, A. Satyanarayana notes that there has been a gradual decline of the power and authority of the landed class as a whole. The zamindars and Brahmins have lost their hegemonic authority since the late 1950s, when land reforms were introduced in the State of Andhra Pradesh. Consequent upon land reforms, a class of rural rich emerged from among the principal agricultural castes which in fact became a threat to the zamindars and Brahmins. Soon this 'new class' began to displace the traditional dominant castes/groups, and also received the support of a large number of people as its members belonged to the numerically preponderant castes.

Caste goes beyond the boundaries of kinship and family ties as it involves specialization of labour/work on a wider corporate basis. In *The Formation of Caste Society in Kerela: Historical Antecedents*, Rajan Gurukal traces the genesis of the caste system in Kerala and observes that the

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actual formation of castes took place in the temple-centred Brahmin villages having agrarian activities. Brahmins, landlords and temples played a crucial role in the multiplication of castes and sub-castes. The peculiar systems of land relations and service tenure were responsible for the creation of the system of hereditary occupational groups. The Brahminical ideal of 'ritual status' was instrumental in converting these groups into 'endogamous castes'. Ultimately, the society was stratified in terms of higher and lower groups based on the ritual status accorded to various castes/sub U castes. Such a stratified society based on Brahmaninical prescriptions had the tacit approval of the king (ruler) as it was in his interest too to appoint officials and secure professional services on a hereditary basis to ensure the stability of his rule. "Caste-Class Situation in India" by A. B. Bardhan argues that a class of people has upheld the ideology of caste, and has kept it alive even in the most adverse of situations.

In *Caste, Class and Social Consciousness: Reflections on Contemporary Indian Situation,* Javeed Alam looks at the constitution of social consciousness in contemporary India with regard to caste and class. Rapid shifts in the consciousness of the same very people ranging from democratic struggles to communal and sectarian fights have been observed. Alam considers class, caste and social consciousness as aspects of a totality, that is, the social being. These are being transformed via retarded capitalism.

A low class man may, by leading a virtuous life, rise to the level of a higher class man and he should be ranked as such. In like manner a high class man can, by leading a sinful life; sink down to the level of a class lowers than his and should be considered as such. Thus, the qualifications, character and knowledge of a person determined the class of that individual. There are historical proofs of this class mobility. Sage Javal of an unknown class became a Brahmin (Chhandogya Upanishad); Vishwamitra, Kshatriya by birth, became a Brahmin (Mahabharata); sage Matang, an outcaste by birth, became a Brahmin. Vashishta

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was born a prostitute, Vyasa of a fisherwoman and Parasra of a Chandala woman.

Both Ibbetson and Nesfield, the pioneers of the sociological study of caste, endorse the view that caste is mainly occupational in origin. Once caste replaced classes, the Hindu society showed a bias towards the upper three classes and prejudice towards the Sudras and increasing contempt for the untouchables. Castes emerged sometime in post-Vedic period, 600 BC - 300 AD. Of all the features of the caste system, the most blatant has been that of purity and pollution. However, observance of the rules has shown regional variations, being stricter in south India than in the north; and inter-caste variations. Paraiyan, or the Tamil unapproachable, has given the word pariah to the English language. The more glaring example of social degradation like keeping away from upper castes 24 paces (in Tamil Nadu); dragging a thorny branch to wipe out his footprints (Mahars in Maratha country); restriction on umbrellas, and wearing of shoes (Izhavas and Shanars in Malabar), were not evident in the relatively tolerant Punjab or Delhi area. But even here, a valmiki (Bhangi) walking in the streets of the towns had to carry a broom and to shout "Valmiki, Valmiki" to warn unwary people about his polluting nearness.

Valmiki living in the most crowded parts of Delhi are physically segregated and socially completely isolated from fellow Indians. Each *basti* or *katra* is a residential unit popularly called *mohalla*. It acts as a unit of organization. Kinship terms are applied to the members of the *mohalla*. It functions as an exogamous unit. Marriages within the immediate and adjacent mohallas are not a desirable alternative. For a shehri (city) Valmiki to marry off his daughter into a non-shehri Valmiki household will be tantamount to loss of status. This is 'pratiloma' exogamy. The reverse (hypergamy) is acceptable. Dr. Tripathy has effectively portrayed the fact that, without access to vital economic resources and bargaining power, the Harijans have become one of the most exploited peripheral groups

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in the Indian society. Predominantly rural, they have been mainly landless rural agricultural labourers, marginal share-croppers and farmers commonly indebted beyond redemption.

His study of contemporary India and Orissa shows that the Dalits have been kicked, raped and burnt, refused minimum wages, their properties have been destroyed and they have been killed. His study of village Jari and Kesharpur reveals that the Dalits are discriminated against with reference to living wage, share-cropping, money-lending, drawing water from public wells, entry into the temples, service of tea and snacks in the hotels, service in the grocery shops, services of the barber, washerman, cowherds man, priest, community feasts and marriage with caste Hindus. Numerical strength, better economic opportunities, urban contact, better communications, better exposure to mass-media, assistance from external leadership, stronger participation in the political process have helped the Harijans in Jari to have greater resort to protest political action against their socio-economic disabilities than Kesharpur.

Dalits in rural Orissa at Jari village (where Dalits are a majority) and Kesharpur (where dalits are a minority) can provide an overview. However, he could have set the theoretical framework in terms of the debate on caste, class and power. He has taken the views of Beteille, Srinivas and Kothari. He could have taken the views of Gail Omvedt, Galanter, Shanshyam Shah, etc.

The Harijans or Dalits live in sub-human social existence, abject poverty, economic exploitation, a subculture of submission and political powerlessness. They have withstood the psycho-economic pressure of social conformity for centuries. They have degraded nature of working relations with the higher castes and they are involved in works like scavenging and sweeping. They are considered to be visited by a curse and are treated as untouchables. The status quo was maintained by sanctions

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and the Harijans were kept in a state of constant fear under a permanent threat of violence. During the Muslim rule, many of these untouchables and low caste people embraced Islam and joined the invaders partly to avoid prosecution and partly in search of freedom.

The 15 Harijan families in Kesharpur village constitute 12 per cent of the population. Two Harijan communities live here, such as: the Hadies and the Dhobies. 15 family heads were interviewed. Dhobies constitutes 20 per cent of the Harijan population. The Dhobies do not accept food and water from the Hadies. The Harijans in Kesharpur remain in abysmal poverty, illiteracy and ignorance. They are denied a living wage in the village and they remain semi-starved. Overwhelming majority of Harijans are landless agricultural labourers. Wages for agricultural labour remains low. The Harijans still depend on their traditional occupation. The caste Hindu employers do not touch them while making payment. Majority of the Harijans make loans from consumption needs. The Hadi Harijans do not get loan from the village common-fund. They pay exorbitant rates of interest to the money-lenders. They bring their drinking water from the tube-well of their own street. An overwhelming majority of Harijans are prohibited drinking water from the public wells and public tube-wells in caste Hindu streets. The tea shop-keeper does not give drinks and snacks to the Harijans in the cups used by caste Hindus. The Harijans do not get the services of the barber, the washerman, the cowherdsman and the priest in the village. They are not allowed to inter-dine with caste Hindus. They are not allowed to enter temples. Caste Hindus do not marry Harijans. Their participation in elections is passive. The small number, poverty and fear discourage them to contest elections. There is no Harijan elites in the village.

In Jari village, 500 Harijan families constitute more than 50 per cent of the population. 50 family heads were interviewed. Harijan communities like the Gokha, the

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Kandara, the Pano, the Dhobi live in this village. Harijans remain in abject poverty and illiteracy. They are denied a living wage and they remain semi-starved. An overwhelming majority of the Harijans are agricultural labourers. The female Harijans are paid much less than the Harijan male labourers. The Harijans pull rickshaws, trolleys and do small business being financed by banks under different government welfare schemes. A few depend on their traditional occupations.

Harijans are discriminated against in their share in share-cropping and in case of money lending. Majority are prohibited to draw drinking water from the village public wells and tube-wells. They do not get the services of the barber, washerman, cow herdsman, and the priest in the village. They are not allowed to worship in village temples. They are discriminated in the tea-shops and grocery shops. Harijans so not enjoy equal status in village community feasts and the caste Hindus do not marry them. Their participation in politics is active. They contest village elections and panchayat elections. They attend political meetings. They vote for Congress because they get some economic benefits. The party has helped the Harijans to get benefits from the welfare schemes of the government. Between the Malas and Madigas, there is a constant conflict over their respective status in relation to the other though both are untouchables to the caste Hindus. But the caste Hindus seem to grant the Malas higher status rather than to the Madigas. Subba Reddy has listed certain activities which are exclusively assigned to the Mala and the Madiga castes. These are: (1) the office of the village servant and this entails manual assistance to the village officers, i.e., the Karnam (revenue official) and the Munsif (police Patel); (2) disposal of the dead village cattle; (3) digging of grave and two important tasks of capturing sacrificial animal and cutting its neck during the festival of the village goddess. These duties in certain districts fall to the Mala and elsewhere to the Madiga, and there is no fixed rule. Both the Malas and Madigas work as agricultural labourers.

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Malas provide additional hands whenever required for by the non-Brahman higher castes, for example, carrying a Reddy landlord's luggage from a nearby bus-stop to the village or the other way. Madigas are traditionally leather-workers. They tan the skin and make leather articles like foot-wear for villagers, for which they are paid in cash or kind. They are also the carrion-disposers and during the festival occasions like marriage and ceremonies in honour of the village deity, they serve as drum- beaters and sacrificers of the sacrificial animals.

The Hindu gods, Rama, Krishna, Venkateswara, Lakshmi, etc., are also worshipped by the Malas and Madigas at their homes. They are not allowed to enter village temples, nor are they allowed to build their own temples for these gods and goddesses in their localities. They can only build temples for their own caste deities. The village watch-men are generally the Malas.

Lack of real sincerity and commitment at the political level, incompetence, inefficiency, red-tapism and worst of all these evils, corruption in the bureaucracy looms large over even in post-colonial India apathy and indifference. Even SC employees working in the office of the Director of Social Welfare at Hyderabad also behave the same way as their non-SC colleagues behave towards their SC brethern. Another evil is interference by political leaders like MLAs, MLCs from SC groups throwing their weight and influence to obtain benefits to their supporters or followers, be it scholarships, land, or house-site allotment, loans, housing grants, thus sometimes really depriving the merited and deserving among the SC students of their due privileges and benefits.

While these kinds of things happen at the origin of the benefits, the State headquarters, many malpractices are evident at the distribution level in districts. Most of the teachers in schools, as some SC students complained to this researcher, have nothing but apathy towards their SC

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students. Thus the SC students suffer discrimination not only from their non-SC classmates but also from their non-SC teachers, the imparters of learning. Some students also reported that their headmasters cheat those who have been granted scholarships and their parents by paying them lesser amounts. The illiterate parents often have no idea of what amounts they impress their thumb-prints for. Thus 25 per cent to 40 per cent of the scholarships amount in each case is pocketed by the corrupt headmasters who obviously have the clandestine approval of or act under pressures from district authorities through whom they get the sanctions. This happens even in colleges and universities where the dishonest administrative officials have got to be bribed by the recipients to hasten payments to them without being unduly delayed.

While the political elite of the SCs and the government knows these behind-the-screen malpractices and grave corruption, they look like silent spectators. If any complaint is made to the authorities about a malpractice, say in a village school, the government requires the complainant 'to furnish a concrete proof for necessary action to be taken.' Can we expect an illiterate, poor, agricultural SC labourer to do this? Does the government know not his helplessness in this regard? Unfortunately, even the SC political leaders often tend to sit quiet witnessing all this because they fear political repercussions from the dominant, powerful caste Hindu section in the society. Conflict is also possible in harmonic system lie India if non-traditional values like modernization, politicization, special privileges and safeguards impinge upon the traditional values. The conflict between the Harijans and the upper caste Hindus started erupting because of discontentment, dissatisfaction among the Harijans with their past status and disabilities, and frustration in their attempts to improve the status and conditions in the traditional set-up through the means of individual efforts or group efforts through Sanskritization process.

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The upper caste try to thwart their progress, the result is conflict between the upper caste Hindus and the Harijans. This conflict is "growing and open" contrary to what Beteille said. It is further in the nature of a class conflict rather than just a caste conflict as the few studies on Harijan-caste Hindu/upper caste conflict seek to project.

Untouchable is the word used by Ambedkar for those castes lowest in the Hindu scale of pollution. It first appeared in print in 1909. However, the word had now disappeared from ordinary parlance following widespread education and the constitutional provisions .The early Government term was Depressed Classes; this was replaced by Scheduled Castes in the Government of India Act of 1935 when these castes were placed on a schedule as qualifying for special rights. Gandhi's name for the Dalits, Harijan, dates from his 1933-34 campaign against untouchability, and is in general usage among Ambedkar's followers. All those who have converted to Buddhism use the term Buddhist and reject all other nomenclature, including their original caste names. Dalit, or downtrodden, has become the most acceptable term in the 1980s.

Varna is the traditional fourfold caste system, consisting of Brahmins (the priestly caste), Kshatriyas (the warrior caste), Vaishyas (the trading caste), all twice-born and allowed to read the Vedas, and the rest of mankind, Shudras (the servile caste). Individual Indian castes probably number in the tens of thousands, and are generally placed in one or another of the varnas. Dalit is more a self-conscious group rather than a traditional caste. There are many different hereditary Dalit castes and sub-castes. Valmiki is a large scavenging caste of the North; Chamars, Madiga, Mahar.

Throughout there is abundant use of poetry and literature that translates into human terms the more objective and detached treatments of the Dalits' condition. This shows the personal dimension of untouchability and

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the extent to which a self-conscious Dalit elite dedicated to the task of forging a new, autonomous culture has developed. The collection does not address the issue of social cleavages, both traditional ones and those stemming from protective discrimination policies that have developed among Dalit communities.

Moreover the larger questions of growing class stratification among Dalits and its relation to reservations, as well as the reluctant effects on the Dalit political movement, are not treated. Joshi's anthology remains, however, a fascinating and valuable contribution on an elusive subject and should be of interest both to area-study specialists and to social scientists concerned with the process of cultural and political change among traditionally disadvantaged minorities.

The movement called Bandaya appeared more than two decades ago (in 1970s) in Kannada literature. It has often commented over that Bandaya literature is nothing more than a spontaneous outburst of the pain and currents of strong feelings of the forlorn and the downtrodden and much less could be spoken about the variety and life in this literature. The pulsating and in-depth feelings and expressions of the Bandaya writers are to be taken into account more seriously as the experiences given out in their writings are of first hand and genuinely original in nature. There is also Dalit literature comprising of writings of the people who have emerged out of Dalit ("untouchable") communities and the masses suffering from indignities and social insecurity in the society and raises a voice of rebellion against any sort of exploitation.

There is a satisfactorily rich quantum of Bandaya Literature in Kannada created during the last decade. Chandrashekhar Patil, Dr. Siddalingayya, Baragur Ramachandrappa's poems were published under the title *Nettaralli Neneda Hoovu* (1991), his novels *Bharata Nagari* and *Benki* both published in 1984, a critical essay on the literature of revolt titled *Bandaya Sahitya Meemams,* a

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collection of short stories titled *Bayalaatada Bheemanna* (1985); H.S. Shivaprakash published significant collection of poems in *Malebidda Nadalli* (1991) and *Anukshna Charite* (1991), plays *Sultan Tippu* (1986), *Mahachaitra* (1990), *Maranayakana Drishtanta* (1991), and *Manteswamy Katha Pasanga;* Devanoor Mahadeva, D.R. Nagaraj wrote a critical essay titled *Amrita Mattu Garuda;* Boluvaraa Mohmed Kunha short story *Devarugala Rajyadalli;* Kum. Veerabhadrapa' novel *Aasthi* (1984), collection of short stories *Doma Mattitra Kathegalu* (1985); Dr. Besagarahalli Ramanna, Ramzan Darga, Aravinda Malagitti novel *Karya* (1990), B.T. Lalita Nayak, Sarah Abubakar's novel *Kadanavirama* (1989), K.S. Bhagavan, Purushottama Bilimale, Sukanya Maruti, Muktayakka, Pratibha, Dr. Channanna Walikar, Basavaraja Sabarada, Vijaya Dabbe, Allama Prabhu Betdur, Bhanu Mustak and Shankar Katagi are among the active protagonists of the movement.

Primarily the aim of Dalit Literature is to highlight the disabilities and difficulties together with atrocities and inhuman treatment meted out to Dalits. The main object is to produce social awakening among the downtrodden. Dr. Ambedkkar fully realised the importance and utility of the Press. So he started a newspaper under the title of *Mook Nayak* (Leader of the Dumb), on January 31,1920. After a period of 6 years, on April 3, 1927, *Bahiskrit Bharat* (Untouchable Bharat), another fortnightly Marathi Journal was published by Dr. Ambedkar. Later on, *Samata*, *Janata*, and *Prabudh Bharat* were published by Dr. Ambedkar from Bombay. In reality ordinary women still faithfully put their trust in all the rites and rituals, and they worship traditional gods and goddesses. There is no difference whether they are Hindu, converted Buddhist, Christian, Muslim or Sikhs etc. They are completely confused. Actually the Dalit women are not to blame.

Once Dr. Ambedkar advised his followers in a seminar if you want to educate your children, first educate women.

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It is the duty of a true Ambedkarite that they must educate and provide all facilities to the women, if they are honestly anxious to fulfill the desires of Dr. Ambedkar. Venubhai Bhatkur and Rangubai Shubhakar, both were poetess and singer born in Maharashtra. Prominent among other names were Jaibai Chaudharry, Tulsibai Bansode etc. Muktabai Sarrgore, Kausalya Baisantri, Meenakshi Moon, Vimal Thorat, Sulekha Kumbhare, Meera Kishore, Kusum Meghwal, Rajni, Susgatta, etc. are writers, poets.

Dalitness is essentially a means towards achieving a sense of cultural identity. The inferiority complex based on "to be Dalit" has now disappeared. Now Dalitness is a source of confrontation. This change has its essence in the desire for justice for all mankind. Dalitness is a matter of appreciating the potential of one's total being. Thus individual, culture, social burden and Dalitness cannot be isolated... For this new Dalit individual, social and cultural freedom has come because of his self-elevation and self-identification... Today's Dalit literature rejects the degraded Hindu social set-up. Dalit writers relentlessly expose the inhumanities and prejudices of caste, society and instill a new social and cultural consciousness.

Very few non-Dalit writers have written on and about the life of Dalits, and most of these wrote out of mere sympathy. Mere sympathy does not produce revolutionary literature. In non-Dalit plays the image of the Dalit and the interpretation of his life are distorted... Needless to say the leading Marathi playrights have projected a Dalit image of weakness and folly in their plays.

Throughout the period of *pandit* poetry following the Bhakti period and during the British period in Maharashtra, 1818-1947, the field of literature was dominated by the literate Brahman. Ambedkar's stress was not only on equality in religion and power in political but also on education and cultural creativity. Most of the creativity took the form of material for the movement - *jalsa* (a singing-message performance), songs, poems, polemics, dozens of

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newspapers and although nothing that was considered Literature by the literary establishment appeared, a regard for literature, the habit of writing and a host of educated young people were well established by the time of the Buddhist conversion in 1956. The Dalit writers began their serious work in the 1950s. Although most of the writers have come out of the Buddhist movement, one of the earliest, Annabbau Sathe, who belonged to the Untouchable Mang caste, was deeply influenced by Communism. In the sixties, the flow of Dalit literary writing increased in the form of short stories, novels and drama. Conferences were held almost every year. In the 1970s, individual volumes of poetry began to publish by the Maharashtra Buddhist Literature Committee, Asmitadarsh Press, or the Marxist Magova Press. Dalit Sahitya has changed the face of Marathi literature and inspired similar literary creativity in Gujarat and Karnataka. There is now serious and important fiction and poetry in Kannada and Gujarati. In Maharashtra, there has been a stead stream of pioneering autobiographies from Mahars, Buddhists, Chambhars, "De-notified tribes", and other Dalits.

Social Mobility has been assumed in the context of one block of central Bihar as an independent cluster or a set of variables gradually leading towards political participation. In the context of Scheduled Castes, "political participation" has been treated as a dependent variable. It is proposed that where there is greater social mobility, there will be greater political participation which would lead to share in political power. Similarly, lesser social mobility would result in lesser political participation. In the absence of greater political participation, nothing can be said about social mobility.

Education can be considered as responsible for the removal of ignorance and opening avenues of new life styles. Occupation can enhance their social status from jajmani to contractual status system. Similarly, a comparative study of occupation of respondents and of their fathers and sons

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and daughters would enable the investigator to find out actual quantum of occupational mobility, if any. Education has a wider scope of its impact than occupation.

Besides them, under the concept of inter-generational mobility, the study would take into account the perceptions and expectations of the respondents pertaining to their changed social status, particularly in view of their own caste fellows and other similar communities, such as backward classes. It would give an idea of inter-generational mobility, leading ultimately to caste mobility. The latter is the ultimate goal of the Scheduled Caste communities which consider it as the gateway of a lifestyle available to the members of upper caste communities.

An access to education itself may also be determined by the existing economic conditions of the individual, and of the society. But educational opportunities can come independent from other sources alsos such as State or government, voluntary agencies, missionaries, etc. Under such circumstances, linkage of education with economic conditions may not be so essential. This is what is happening in India, particularly in case of people belonging to SC and ST. The state is trying to educate the people in a generous manner. In certain cases, education may prove dysfunctional also. After getting education, a SC student may find himself in conflict with members of his family or community whose ways of thinking can run counter to his own. As a changed person, he may find it difficult to adjust himself in rural areas, where the opportunity of living and employment commensurate with his education will not be available. As a result of migration to urban areas, he may be able to change his social position in the society. Single females may find it more difficult to migrate to towns and cities in search of suitable employment, while married females are limited to their husbands' choice of residence, etc.

For the purpose of empirical study, education has to be divided at two levels: (i) professional and (ii) general. General education, obviously, includes non-professional and

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non-technical education. In the present context the SCs are directly related with this form of education. Here, education means literacy. However, it includes from simple literacy to higher education.

The same cannot be applied to girls who remain unable to continue their studies. Thus, it can be concluded that the coming generation would be attending the school in larger number and acquiring higher education. In the case of girls, most of the parents do not send their daughters to school. They have a feeling that if the girls are educated, they would have to look after household works. They were 3 per cent total school-going children. Looking at respondents first child's education, there are only 34 children who never went to school. It is because of the fact that they are the first child of the respondents. The first child, instead of being sent to school, is sent to the field.

Asking about the educational aspiration of the respondents for their sons and daughters, most said they like to give education as long as their male children want. Some illiterate respondents do not want to educate their sons, some would like to give education up to metric, others up to B.A. On the whole, almost all the respondents would wish to see their sons reach an educational standard higher than their own.

Only educated SCs like to send their daughters to the school or college, that too, for a limited period. Few among the respondents with education want their daughters to have education higher than their own, and small percentage wishes to see them at par with their own. Illiterate do not like that their daughters should reach above metric. Only a few desire daughter's education higher than their own. On the whole, the data indicate that there is a big gap between the respondents' level of aspiration regarding the education of their daughters and the education of their sons. Girls remain unable to continue their studies on account of tradition, taboo and conservative outlook. As far as 126 daughters out of 200 are kept below Middle level, more than

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188 wives of 200 respondents are illiterate. Mental level of wives and their daughters remains sociologically closer to each other.

Still more important was the emergence of the possibility of the Depressed Classes acquiring education. As a matter of fact education has been one of the chief factors making for the improvement of the Depressed Classes position. The biggest initial effort to spread education among the Depressed Classes came from the Christian missionaries but later on the government also played its part in making it available to them. Though the oriental system of education was supplanted by the occidental learning in 1835, the fruit of the new educational system had not reached the Depressed Classes before 1854 when liberal grants-in-aid were begun to Christian missionaries for imparting education to the lower classes. The new system of education was "less-religious" in approach and its emphasis on "equalitarianism" challenged the institution of untouchability.

In 1865, under pressure of Christian opinion, government had to lay down the principle that the government schools would be open to all classes. Also in view of the acute poverty of the Depressed Classes the governments in most provinces increased grant-in-aid for the education of a pupil from the Depressed Classes which was more than the grant towards the education of a pupil from the rest of society (Philips, G.E. 1918. The Outcastes: Hope or Work among the Depressed Classes in India. London, p. 26). Theoretically, from now onwards the government schools were open to all; but hostile public opinion gave the law and administration no moral support. In addition to imparting education among the Depressed Classes; the Christian missionaries helped to uplift them, directly or indirectly, in numerous other ways. Spurred by evangelical zeal, missionaries highlighted the evil of untouchability and succeeded in converting a large number of untouchables to Christianity. The coverts acquired a new dignity and instead of being dirty, dishonest, drunken and immoral, this persona became, to some extent, worthy members of society. They

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acquired a new conception of human dignity and of their own worth as men. At the same time the Christian missions developed practical programmes of the Depressed Classes uplift, e.g., land colonies were founded where they could develop on their own lines away from old associations. The missions did not confine their helpful activities of their converts; many non-Christian members of the Depressed Classes were indebted to missionaries for inspiration and practical help. Equally important was the missionaries' criticism of the institution of untouchability which resulted in a reinterpretation of Hinduism at both the ideological and institutional levels -producing a changed attitude among the Hindu elite towards caste and untouchability.

The Courts of Justice established by the British throughout the territory of India and secularization of the legal system. Though it is true that separate codes determined the personal laws of the separate communities, yet there was complete uniformity in regard to the laws concerning the protection of person and property and other aspects of the daily lives of the people. Exclusive caste practices did not have approval of the Judiciary in regard to public facilities such as schools, wells and roads. Indeed the legal system made no distinction on the basis of caste, nor did it provide for any special consideration to a caste like Brahman which was excluded from capital punishment under Hindu kingdoms. Conversely, it brought into existence institutions which were not governed by the traditional norms of neither caste society nor run by the caste Hindus. As such they provided the alternative structure of authority to which members of Depressed Classes could turn for help and relief from the oppression of the traditional society. Positively, the abolition of slavery in 1843 which cut the legal knot binding the serfs and slaves, generally from the caste Hindus, went a long way in ameliorating the conditions of the Depressed Classes.

The combination of these factors produced an atmosphere which if not checked, could destroy the

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traditional pattern of society which had justified persecution of the Depressed Classes. But Brahmans as the traditional guardians of Hindu culture fully understood the threat posted to Hindu religion and their own privileged position by the expansion of British influence. They had many complaint against the governmental encroachments on the sacred domain of caste and other prejudices. The spread of education, systematic policy of Christianizing the Depressed Classes and the legal protection afforded to converts produced a serious Brahmanic reaction in the country. "Government was alleged to have violated the sanctity of caste by bringing the highest and lowest castes together in schools, in the ranks of Army and in the Railway carriages" (Chattopadhaya, Harprasad. 1957. "The Sepoy Mutiny and the Hindu-Muslim Unity" in *Calcutta Review,* vol. 142, March, p. 298).

Therefore, the Brahmans along with other disgruntled elements began instigating soldiers and the common populace to revolt against the Britishers, resulting in the 'Sepoy Mutiny' in 1857. Indeed, the Sepoy Mutiny or the first war of national independence as it has been called by nationalist historians, was the last desperate effort of the Brahmans to defend themselves against the forces of modernity (:28). Emperor Bahadur Shah Zafar, symbolic leader of mutiny, in his proclamation assured the "Pundits and Fakirs" - guardians of the Hindu and Islamic religions respectively that the motive behind the war against the English on account of religion "was the restoration of traditional values." The killing of cows was completely banned in Delhi during the revolt. The act was reminiscent of the Peshwa rule in Western India where the untouchables were forced to tie brooms in the waist so that the Brahmans were saved from walking over the foot-prints of the Depressed Classes.

The mutiny was suppressed by the British with a heavy hand but the consequent changes in the policy of the new government were disastrous for the cause of the Depressed

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Classes. Under the pressure of the Christian missions and advanced public opinion, the government in 1859 had provided for partial breast cloth for the women of the Depressed Classes in South and ordered for the establishment of separate schools for the Depressed Classes' students wherever they found it difficult to secure admission in ordinary schools. Yet, after 1957, the British became extremely cautious about taking any action that might give offence to religious susceptibilities. From that time onward instead of leading advanced public opinion in India the British 'administration tended to act as a brake on it. The government refused to listen to the demands of the missionaries to protect the Depressed Classes. In the educational field, through the grants to mission schools continued, the government slowly disinterested itself from the intimate connection. Moreover, theories of *liaises-faire* and the determination to avoid outburst of popular discontent tightly circumscribed the government's ability to do anything for the uplift of the Depressed Classes. The concession of separate representation to Muslims, coupled with the news of ill-treatment of Indians in South Africa brought about a sharp change in Indians' outlook towards the Depressed Classes. This led to a fresh anti-untouchability campaign.

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4

Dalit Feminism : A Psycho-Social Analysis of Indian English Literature

—Dr. Anita Ghosh

The potential contribution from Dalit women writers to Dalit literature is significant. From the onset, the writings of Dalit women reflected self-experience and burning indignation. Muktabai, an Untouchable girl who read her essay on the problems and sufferings of Untouchables in the school established by the great reformer Jotiba Phule, in 1852, was the first example. After a period of a century or more Dalit women have awakened and are again giving literary expression to their deep feelings. Kamud Pawade, Jyoti Lanjewar, Urmila Pawar, Hira Bansode, Sugandha Shende, Surekhad Bhagat, Asha Thorat, Aruna Lokhand, Susheela Mool and Meena Gajbhiye are examples from Maharsthra.

Kamud Pawade is by profession a lecturer in Sanskrit, once considered a language of the God that the lower castes were not allowed to learn or even to hear. But the times have changed and a Dalit woman teaches Sanskrit to students from the higher castes. Mrs. Pawade has published several articles on culture, social education and women's problems. She already has a book, *Antahsphot* ('Inner Burst'), to her credit. The writings of Mrs. Aruna Lokhande, Mrs. Asha Thorat and Sugandha Shende are impressive and

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self-descipline. Atrocities on Dalit women, the problems of non-educated women and the ugly outlook of educated and advanced Dalit women towards non-educated women are some of the subjects of their writings. Mrs. Thorat also has been doing research on Dalit folk literature.

The Dalit woman is a Dalit amongst Dalits. She has suffered much and she is still suffering. She must walk through the burning desert of casteism in search of some oasis. Mrs. Bansode says it is due to casteism that Dalit women are being dishonoured and molested. In one poem she lodges a complaint in the people's court hoping for justice, but at last she attacks the inhumane game of the oppressors:

> This complaint of mine
> is against the orthodox culture
> which has imprisoned us in a sealed room,
> which has given us the charity of life completely boycotted.
> Where the wind treats us as strangers,
> where the monsoons give us only famines
> where the water plays with us
> the most inhumane game of mirage.
> We are rejecting this
> unclean and poisnous life.
> And to escape from these cruel curses
> will you give me
> a bright and auspicious moon?
> My countrymen, to your court
> I have brought a complaint.
> Will you give me justice?[1]

Like the American movements, the Dalit Panthers and the Dalit school of literature represent a new level of pride, militance and sophisticated creativity. The history of *Dalit Sahitya* (the literature of the oppressed) movement and its themes is more profoundly a part of the Mahar movement

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and the Buddhist revival. The 1969 Diwali issue of *Marathwada* published from Aurangabad. This popular and widely circulated issue devoted a large part of its Diwali issue to Dalit literature which meant that Dalit literature had arrived on the Marathi literary scene. *Asmitadarsh* (mirror of identity) is the chief organ of Dalit literature (:268). The *Times Weekly Supplement* of 25th November 1973 (Bombay) had a review of Dalit literature.Throughout the period of *pandit* poetry following the Bhakti period and during the British period in Maharashtra, 1818-1947, the field of literature was dominated by the literate Brahman.

Ambedkar's stress was not only on equality in religion and power in political but also on education and cultural creativity. Most of the creativity took the form of material for the movement - *jalsa* (a singing-message performance), songs, poems, polemics, dozens of newspapers and although nothing that was considered Literature by the literary establishment appeared, a regard for literature, the habit of writing and a host of educated young people were well established by the time of the Buddhist conversion in 1956.

The Dalit writers began their serious work in the 1950s. Although most of the writers have come out of the Buddhist movement, one of the earliest, Annabhau Sathe, who belonged to the Untouchable Mang caste, was deeply influenced by Communism. In the sixties, the flow of Dalit literary writing increased in the form of short stories, novels and drama. Conferences were held almost every year. In the 1970s, individual volumes of poetry began to be published by the Maharashtra Buddhist Literature Committee, Asmitadarsh Press, or the Marxist Magova Press. Dalit Sahitya has changed the face of Marathi literature and inspired similar literary creativity in Gujarat and Karnataka. There is now serious and important fiction and poetry in Kannada and Gujarati. In Maharashtra, there has been a stead stream of pioneering autobiographies from Mahars, Buddhists, Chambhars, "De-notified tribes", and other Dalits.

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Dalit writers are extremely interested in Black American literature and see their own movement as a parallel phenomenon. The chief influence is as support, as proof that a group similar to the Dalit can become militant, creative and progress in a hostile society.

Mina Gajbhiye, a very young woman, is so far the only feminine poet regarded in the new Dalit school. Dalit women in Bombay organized the Dalit Stri Sameadini (Dalit Women's Dialogue) in 1986, probably the first women's literary conference in Maharashtra. In the past three years, two barely educated women, Bebi Kamble and Shantabai Kamble, have published their life stories. Women's poetry is also becoming important, and there are now, at least, six or seven published Dalit women poets.

Another dimension of Untouchable cultural activity is encountered in the new research on the songs and epics of the Untouchables themselves, a genre well represented by the "crying songs" of an Untouchable caste described for the first time in a recent article by Egnor.

Even though it is the Mang caste which is most often described as "village musicians" in the *Gazetteers,* Mahars seem to have been the chief muscians and actors in *tamasha,* the folk drama of Maharashtra from the sixteenth century onwards. However, the low status *of tamasha* women countered an image of progress, so the village drama was frowned upon by Ambedkar.

The social construction of poor Dalit women along patriarchal, middle class norms which had a negative impact upon women's cultural expression, status, etc.; and the urban bias of the Dalit elite in terms of what they promoted as representative of Dalit culture, knowledge, traditions, etc. This led to further margialization of the poor, rural Dalits and women.

Other Dalit groups have claims to cultural achievement. Many of the Bhangi caste call tmemselves "Valmiki" tracing their lineage to the author of the *Ramayana. The Dalit Voice,* an English weekly from

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Bangalore, claims from time to time that Devadasi culture, which includes the classical dance from Bharata Natyam, is a Dalit form of creativity. The June 1986 issue *of Religion and Society* (Bangalore) is devoted to Dalit culture, Hindu as well as Christian.

There are more than forty Dalit theatre groups. Theatre called Dalit Rangabhumi spread from Pune to a number of cities in the state and to Delhi. Many write their own plays, a few adapt plays from the American Black theatre; some revive the arts of *tamasha.* A Dalit art exibition was held in Nagpur in 1979 and an all-India art conference as called in Hyderabad in 1987.

By the early 1980s there were more than 105 million Untouchables distributed throughout penninsular India. The exact number is difficult to determine, because government statistics do not account for those who are converts to non-Hindu religions, even when they are demonstrably treated as Untouchables by their neighbours. At the lowest estimate, the Untouchables account for more than one out of every seven Indians.

Nearly 90 per cent live in India's rural villages, compared to approximately 80 per cent of the higher-caste population. Although Untouchables are commonly clustered together in segregated hamlets at the edge of a village, they are a small and vulnerable minority in any given region, making resistance to exploitation and violence very difficult. The 1971 census figures show that 52 per cent of the Untouchable workforce were landless agricultural laborers, compared to 26 per cent of the non-Untouchable workforce. The Untouchable literacy rate was only 14.7 per cent compared to 29.5 per cent for the total population.

Untouchable is by no means a homogenous category. Language has been a dividing line. Only recently has there been a substantial pool of Untouchables with a command of several languages, including English, who could serve as human links between Untouchable movements in different linguistic regions. Each Untouchable caste has also been

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defined by the same social rules of endogamy (in the Indian context, marriage exclusively within the caste community) that shape the entire Indian caste system. The result has been the development of a variety of distinctive Untouchable cultures, with significant differences in the direction and pace of mobilization for change. Frequently it also means social conflicts that make cooperative efforts difficult.

The problem is all the more acute because the individual hierarchic ranking of hereditary castes that permeates the dominant society does not stop at the social border of Untouchability. Some Untouchable castes long regarded themselves as superior to others, and even imposed their own internal touch-me-not-ism. One of the hallmarks of the contemporary Dalit movement has been its explicit rejection of older divisive strategies by which a given Untouchable caste would seek its own liberation by trying - usually unsuccessfully — to distance itself from other Untouchable castes. By now the goal is liberation of all Dalits - and this means dismantling the burden of centuries.

For the past several years, official Indian figures on violent attacks against Untouchables have routinely exceeded 10,000 cases per year. Indian human rights workers report a far larger number go unrecorded, buried by collusion between police and local privilege. Justice is rare, even when charges are filed.

Tons of scriptures were written which contained details and directions of punishments, prohibitions and commandments against Shudras. The "Untouchables" are found at the bottom of the caste hierarchy. The Untouchable have the lowest ritual standing and usually the lowest economic position and traditionally subject to onerous social and civic disabilities.

They were to earn a living by doing such jobs as executing condemned criminals, cleaning the villages, removing the bodies of dead animals, tanning leather, or

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doing any other work that the touchable asked them to do. It was sin for any caste Hindu to look at these people, to talk to them, to receive them in their homes, or even to have their shadow fall upon them. Their utensils could not be used by anybody else, nor could they eat from utensils belonging to the "pure" caste. They had no right to possess cattle, horses, sheep or goats, and could possess only dogs and mules. They had top wear clothes which belonged to the dead. They could not wear gold, silver, pearls and jewels. Untouchables living outside the village limits could enter the village only during the day time, and that too only on displaying some external symbol of their untouchability.

After the 1857 war, the British changed the policy and decided not to offend the caste Hindus (by recuiting Mahars into the army) .The Mangs, the Chamars, the Dhors have not altogether left their traditional occupations. The traditional tasks of these castes are becoming increasingly irrelevant in modern life. It has resulted in making them poorer... the Mangs (who do basket and rope-making) have become nearly jobless in the villages. Prostitution is on the increase among them because of increasing poverty. It was shocking to learn that sometimes encouragement for prostitution came from the elders in the family itself.

M. Swami Margaret confessed in a journal that she was a Dalit-middle-class, University educated, Telugu speaking Dalit-Christian-Woman. All these identities have a role in the way she perceive herself and the worlds she inhabit. She, as a Dalit woman, primarily writes for Dalit women to uphold their interests. This statement of hers is necessary because if we do not define ourselves for ourselves, we will be defined by others - for their use and to our detriment. This voice is not representative of all Dalit women. However, she knows that her voice is important because it is the voice of a socially denigrated category, suppressed and silenced.

Indian consciousness is of the dominant group. It is caste oriented. The sub-altern consciousness of the Dalits

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and Tribals have not been taken seriously, it is true that we should articulate it as it exists among the Dalits and Tribals. The sub-altern consciousness should represent the consciousness of an oppressed nationality in our country. This consciousness is of anger, rejection, and protest of the existing dominant socio-economic, political and religious situations in India. But this consciousness includes the positive human values for a new social order. This is particularly true of tribal subaltern consciousness of an egalitarian, community ownership of means of production, distibution according to needs, and a democratic form of government in which leadership is always of Panches-Corporate and consensus in decision making process. The human values must come out clearly for an indigenous people (Adi people), humanity in our country.

M. Swamy Margaret is an intellectual in her own right. She has submitted a path-breaking dissertation on "Writing Dalit Feminist Discourse Through Translation: Translating Select African American Short Stories into Telugu". She is now pursuing her Ph.D. at CIEFL, Hyderabad. She is also a research fellow at Anveshi, a Research Centre for Women's Studies.

Her own self-perception and understanding as a Dalit woman, as a point of intersection/an overlap between the categories "Dalit" and "woman", took shape in the University of Hyderabad when she joined there for her M.A. in English. She fell in love with the sprawling campus instantly. Some familiar-looking young men came to her aid in filling the endless forms and challans, saying they are from the Ambedkar Students' Union. Hearing Ambedkar's name she knew she belonged there. However, it did not take much time before she realized they refused to see an equal intellectual comrade in her. Like the majority of men, they acknowledge a Dalit woman's presence as only fit for handing over bouquets to the guest speakers they invite for their meetings. At the most, she can give the vote of thanks. They do not consider her in important decisions or in

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writing papers. Later she learned that excluding women from their committees was a deliberate policy they followed as they believed women's presence would cause "problems" and come in the way of serious politics. Women inevitably mean "problems", their sexuality being an uncontrolled wild beast waiting to pounce upon the unassuming Dalit men in the movement. It is assumed that they divert the attention from the larger concerns of the movement.

She was given a nice room in the corner of the wing in the Ladies Hostel. But the only thing was that it was unused for a couple of years in spite of it being the best room in that wing. She was told but she did not ask why. Later she was told it was the room where one Dalit woman Suneetha hung herself to the fan, after continuous sexual exploitation and ultimate rejection by a Reddy man when the question of marriage came up. Some inquired if that fact scared me. The ghost that stared at me was not the thought of a hanging female body but it was my own body which is Dalit and woman and is as vulnerable as Suneetha's. The stories of Dalit women being used and thrown by upper caste men, told and retold by her mother came back shouting loudly in my ears.

She also saw the urban, fluent-in-English, extremely confident women, who called themselves feminist, who she could hardly talk to. When she did talk to them she was struck by their confidence, their go-get attitude. There were no shared fears, pleasures or problems with them. They do not seem to have a caste to be bothered about.

Amidst such an entirely new atmosphere, there was this pressure to prove herself to be a good student, a meritorious student. The task did not seem too daunting in the beginning. Why should it, when there is such a huge library and thousands of books at my disposal? And she was known for my intelligence! As a student of English literature, she came to see some very touching literature of Afro-American women writers. They provided me with the tools to explain my exclusion within the Ambedkar

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Students Association, my sense of distance from other feminists who are from upper castes, an eerie sense of alienation she felt in the classrooms and outside. They also gave me strength to remain herself without trying too much to fit in any of these foreign structures. Her association with other Dalit feminists on the campus gave me a sense of belonging. Their struggle for representation of women in the Students' Union Body on rotation basis strengthened our collective self that they were entitled too. All this empowering experience began translating into her paper presentations and term papers, and in her readings of texts in the classroom. There was a corresponding dwindling in my grades. Asserting her position has always been important for me. Hence she has been learning to laugh at them (both her teachers and her grades).

The issue of *Insight* on gender and caste, many articles raise the question of alliance-building among various movements, especially between the Dalit movement and the feminist movement. Dalit feminists share a definite sense of identification with many basic articulations raised by both these movements. We have gained a lot from them. While it is important and strategically wise to form coalitions and build solidarity with other marginalized groups, it should be considered only when a movement is armed with a clear understanding of its own historicity based on the experience of oppression and discrimination. It is productive to have in. mind the historical dialogue between different marginalized sections of people. Otherwise, there is the danger of Dalit women, their self-definition and their peculiar positioning in the society being rendered invisible. For example, the Dalit ideologues like Katti Padma Rao, Gopal Guru and Gaddar seem to be less sensitive to the internal patriarchy of Dalit communities. They maintain that all women are Dalits. Since the upper caste women are not allowed to enter into their kitchens and are treated as impure during their menstrual periods, they are also untouchables! Here "untouchability" is the ideal framework to fight against caste oppression, claims

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Gopal Guru. What Guru overlooks is that untouchability is a phenomenon that evokes various notions and images of bodies—bodies that are marked by their caste, gender, class, age, sexual orientation and other identities. And different bodies are ascribed different cultural meanings. Not all bodies possess even identities. Not all Dalit bodies are one, not all female bodies are one. They interact with each other being caught in a complex web of intersecting identities. Dalit man, even those identified with the movement, does not want to see us as intellectuals. "You are a Dalit body, a Dalit female body. Why can't I possess it. Why can't I just come near you"? It is threatening. This happens at a very physical level. To prevent this, one of the strategies that I use, is to stay with upper-caste women as Dalit men will not dare to express and behave in the same manner with them. This lack of understanding of this caste-gender dynamics is reflected in the work of some important upper-caste feminists like Volga, Vasantha Kannabhiran, Kalpana Kannabhiran, and Chhaya Datar, who feel that women of all communities and Dalits are both badly discriminated against by the diku system, and therefore all women are Dalits! These intellectuals do not, for a moment, think of Dalits who are also women. In spite of their awareness that women are divided along caste and class lines, they comfortably draw the analogy between "women" and "Dalits". The social status of upper caste women has never been like that of Dalit men or women. Patriarchy, as it operates within and between different castes is determined by the caste identity of individuals. Politics based on difference should be sensitive not only to the difference that matters to them, which they perceive as important but also to other differences.

The aim of identity politics like that of the feminists and Dalits is to ultimately dissolve the crippling effects of these burdensome identities. Asserting an identity is to lay claim on the universal. This universalistic vision can be realized only with the analytical tools that Dalit feminisms provide with. They aim at actively participating in

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eradicating all forms of violence, intolerance, hierarchy and discrimination in the society. An effective way of achieving this ideal is to take "difference" seriously and engage with the politics of difference.

Muktabai, a mang woman, in 1855, wrote about the subjugation that the poor mangs and mahars, especially women, suffered at the hands of the upper castes. She points how the mahars have internalized brahminical values and saw themselves as superior to mangs. Dalit women writers are sensitive to the differential treatment meted out to different subcastes and women within Dalit communities. Muktabai challenges the Brahmins to "try to think about it from your own experience". We find that, according to her, "experience" has to be the basis of one's understanding and analysis of the society.

Brutal patriarchy within Dalit communities is one issue which repeatedly appears in Dalit feminist discourses. However, the views of Dalit male intellectuals on the negotiations between caste and gender are interesting. Ilaiah compares patriarchy in Dalits and Hindu patriarchy and declares that the former is more democratic! How can any oppressive structure be democratic at all? He substantiates his argument by stating that certain customs like paadapooja (touching the feet) are not observed in Dalit families. He, of course, notices the fact that there are oppressive practices like wife-battering prevalent in the Dalit families. However, "the beaten up wife has a right to make the attack public by shouting, abusing the husband, and if possible by beating the husband in return". The Dalit woman shouts back not because of "democratic patriarchy" but because of the socio-economic situation she is trapped in. The Dalit woman, more often than not is dependent on her own labour. She labours outside her home from morning till evening. When she comes home, her husband will be waiting to snatch her hard-earned money which is often the only source to feed the family. If she refuses to give him the money, the husband beats her up. The woman shouts back;

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in the process of resistance, she might beat him back. This is not because of democratic patriarchy in her family. There are certain debilitating stereotypes of Dalit families in general and Dalit women in particular, which mar a clear understanding of her location in Indian society.

Our self-perception is crucial for building our politics. The Young Dalit women should not get subsumed in the relatively macro-identities of mainstream progressive movements such as the male Dalit movement or the upper-caste feminist movement. It is only by retaining our unique voice within these movements that we can contribute meaningfully to these movements and benefit from them. Giving ourselves a separate space does not mean we want a complete break with these movements.

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Dalit Literature and Dalit Poetry : A Brief Survey

— S. K. Paul

In a wholly racialised society, there is no escape from racially inflected language, and the work writers do to unhobble the imagination from the demands of the language is complicated, interesting, and definitive. Indian society, with its history of oppression of Dalits, often fails to recognize the Dalits' contribution to the repository of Indian literature through their distinctive criticism of the inhuman social system. Recently it came closer to redeeming itself a bit, as the Sahitya Akademi, while celebrating its Golden Jubilee, presented its Golden Jubilee Life Time Achievement Award to a Dalit poet, Namdeo Dhasal, who symbolises the essence of Dalit protest poetry. Dhasal with his unique style revolutionised the Marathi literary landscape and inspired a whole movement of Dalit literature in the rest of the Indian languages.

Dhasal was one of the founder leaders of the Dalit Panthers movement, which flowered into a renaissance of Marathi literature with an unprecedented outburst of creative activity among Dalits. It draws a great parallel to the Harlem Renaissance of 1920s of the Blacks in America and the Panthers drew immediate inspiration from the Black Panthers movement and black poetry. The Dalit literary movements in all Indian languages posed a tremendous challenge to the existing literary imaginations

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with Telugu Dalit literary movement of the 1990s being the latest example.

Dhasal's writings represented the anger and reflected the untouchable's protest voice against oppression and societal discrimination. His first collection of poems *Golpitha* (1972) took Marathi literary circles by storm and broke all the rules of traditional Marathi literature. Golpitha, named after a red light district of Mumbai city, caused an uproar for its vivid language where Dhasal employed common (vulgar) language used in the red light area, shocking the traditionalists:

... I am headless body of a rat with a pyramid rising above me

Meat and fish

Rice and eggs

Bootleg liquor and flowers of white champak

Kisses, embraces, coital postures, jewels,

And beds, and a house with a leaking roof,

And the rhythm of a lullaby.

I am squeezed: in my yearning

Feminine beauty flowers

The Mona Lisa painted by Leonardo da Vinci

In the service of A-B

Rain driving down in sheets, a dying cigarette,

A dehydrated dancing girl,

Contrasting colour harmony

I too have poverty as my own piece of land....

(From *Golpitha*; translated by Dilip Chitre.)

Dhasal's works include *Moorkh Mhataryane, Itihasatil Apaphavya, Khel, Priya Darshin, Ambedkari Chalawal, Tuhi Iyatta Kanchi*, and two novels, *Negative Space* and

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Hadki Hadawala. Dhasal, like other writers, was inspired and frequently invocated Dr. B.R. Ambedkar, whom the Dalit literary movement recognises as the father of Dalit literature. This is one on Dr. B.R. Ambedkar:

> *You are the one*
>
> *Who dances from shrub to shrub like the butterfly*
>
> *Of the new year and emit rays of light.*
>
> *Who goes on expanding like railway lines*
>
> *Who unnerves the foundations of universities*
>
> *who travels from freedom to freedom.*
>
> *You are the only one, charioteer of our chariot*
>
> *Who comes amongst us through fields and crowds,*
>
> *And protest marches and struggles.*
>
> *Never leaves our company*
>
> *And delivers us from exploitation*
>
> *You are the one*
>
> *The only one.*

(From Golpitha; translated by D.B. Karnik.)

The first introduction of Marathi Dalit literature to English readership came through the *Times of India,* Weekly Supplement on November 25, 1973. Anthologies edited by Arjun Dangle (*Poisoned Bread*, 1992), Eleanor Zelliot with Mulkraj Anand (1992) and Eleanor Zelliot's *From Dalit to Untouchable* (1996) later carried translations of Dhasal's poems. His poetry featured exclusively in *Journal of South Asian Literature* (1982 &1989); *Bulletin* of concerned Asian Scholars and *Translation* journal in 1989. He was invited to the International Literary Festival in Berlin in 2001. Interestingly, one can find a lengthy account of Namdeo Dhasal in Nobel Laureate V.S. Naipaul's *India: A Million Mutinies Now* (1990). He was awarded Padmashri in 1999.

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Dhasal's career has its own turn of events. The Maharashtra Government continued to persecute the Panthers for their militant ideology. But Dhasal accepted the literary award of State Government for *Golpitha*, which created cracks among the Panthers. In 1974, the Dalit Panthers split. His political career took him to Congress Party and later, surprisingly, to the Shiv Sena, against whose ideology Panthers waged a war.

The United States celebrates its Harlem Renaissance: one of the most pungent literary attacks on racial discrimination. It gratefully accepts the Renaissance as a great cultural and literary event and made it a part of the nations' consciousness. Why was the Indian nation deprived of the great contribution Dalit literature has made to the literary landscape, as great literary works are languishing for want of translations?

Lothan Lutze of Germany and Laurie Hovel McMillan of the U.S. did basic work translating Namdeo Dhasal poems. Dilip Chitre, a long-time friend of Dhasal and translator, Jayant Karve and A.K. Ramanujan have played significant roles. All the translations we have were due to their individual efforts. No concerted move to translate the voluminous writings of Dalit literature into English and other languages was initiated by the literary academies.

But as the great vehicle of Dalit literature inspires generations, it is time for the celebration of the protest, in its true spirit of pain and agony in being a Dalit. Dalit literature deserves to be known to the world, to the children, the elders and the Generation Next of this country. In a multi-lingual India, it is time we have all the translations into all languages, in our hands.

As Namdeo Dhasal, one of the greatest poets of the 20th Century watches from the mixed scented lanes of Golpitha, Dalit literature is flowing into the 21st Century mixed with blood, sweat and anger, flowering into greatest poetry that this country is producing now.

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Dalit literature will bury Sanskrit under "yards of books", and in the next 20 to 30 years, English will emerge as the national language, according to the Dalit activist, Kancha Ilaiah. Inaugurating a national seminar on Dalit writing, organised by the Centre for Comparative Literature, University of Kerala, here today, Mr. Ilaiah said Hinduism as a socio-religious force was going to die within the next hundred years and no force would be able to prevent that.

Dalit literature alone could challenge the "Hinduised and Sanskritised" Indian literature, he said. It was wrong to label Dalit literature as post-modern.

All the acclaimed writings so far, save those of some authors, had dealt with semi-secular Hindu topics or essentially Hindu topics. All such writings were centred round the Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita. Literature so far had been a process of Hinduisation of knowledge. Such literature also did not speak anything about civilisation.

Dalit literature was really post-Hindu literature, which sought to do away with Sanskrit symbolisms. This process was set in motion by Dr. Ambedkar. Sanskrit was essentially a casteist language, anti-people and anti-production, he charged.

The Vedas, the Upanishads and the Gita have not inspired nationalism in Indians. "In fact, the reading of a holy book was not a part of the Hindu tradition. Christians read the *Bible*, Muslims the *Koran*. The number of people reading the Bible in India was on the rise. But I have not seen so many people reading the *Gita*. If there had been no Bible and Koran in India, the nation would not have got freedom. If there had been no English, India would not have been a nation," he said.

Dalit literature is basically also about women's emancipation. "Though Saraswati is the goddess of learning in the Hindu mythology, there is no record of Saraswati writing a book. Lakshmi, though she is the goddess of

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wealth, was, in actual Hindu life, very poor because women were not allowed to possess wealth. On the other hand, we have the writings of Sumangala and Amrapali in Buddhist tradition," he said. That tradition of socio-spiritual liberation was carried forward by people such as Ayyankali, Sree Narayana Guru and Mahatma Phule.

Today, the Dalits in the country had reached a stage where they are no longer willing to fight for their cause with weapons. Now they are fighting through books. "For every trishul that the forces of Hinduism distribute, we will distribute 100 books to Dalit children. Dalit literature has the power to change the Indian social structure, but Indian society is yet to recognise that power,"[3] he added.

In an era where human rights and their awareness is an all-pervasive issue, literary depictions of the experiences of marginalised groups of people have special importance. The recent spurt in Dalit literature in India is an attempt to bring to the forefront the experiences of discrimination, violence and poverty of the Dalit. Often, with religious and social sanction, these experiences have for long been silenced and marginalised as unliterary. More recent is the trend to deny their existence altogether. The growing corpus of Dalit texts-poems, novels and autobiographies-however, seeks to ratify this while describing the nuances of Dalit cultures. If men have it bad, women have it worse: Bama's autobiography-novel Karukku is the first Tamil Dalit text on the Christian Dalit community. Having begun in Maharashtra and Gujarat, Dalit literature has today taken substantial shape in a variety of Indian languages such as Kannada, Tamil, Hindi and Malayalam. A large number of these texts are immediately available in English for a wider audience both within and outside India. Quite a few of these texts—especially the translations—also double as textbooks; Dalit literature is being increasingly taught in colleges and universities.

This phenomenal growth in Dalit writing is a part of the growing need of the Dalits themselves to articulate their

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experiences. These texts which have for centuries been relegated to the margins, offer a challenge to literary aesthetics which, with its caste and gender bias, have for long been masquerading as universal.

In the unashamed descriptions of the traumas of being an "untouchable" and the target of upper-caste ideology and machinations, these voices question the institutions and ideologies that have placed them at the margins. The use of a heavily dialectal variety of language offers a further challenge to notions of literary language while also allowing for the cultures of the Dalit communities to emerge.

Although Dalit literature comes in all genres, the autobiographies are the most popular. Narendra Jadhav, author of '*Outcaste*', traced this to the fact that when a group of people who have been silenced for centuries begin to talk, the natural tendency is to tell their own stories. Indeed, a large number of the stories are testimony to the atrocities of the tradition—sanctioned discrimination—a discrimi-nation that many of us prefer to think does not exist at all or exists only in the rural areas. Dalit hero-author: Narendra Jadhav's *Outcaste* has been translated into English and French.

Sharankumar Limbale's '*The Outcaste*', originally in Marathi titled '*Akkarmashi*,' shows how much the caste system and its attendant poverty and social stigma follow a Dalit everywhere—even into the city. Not acknowledged by his upper-caste Patil father, Sharan is marginalised because his mother, with whom he lives, is a low-caste Mahar. The excruciating poverty of his childhood is described in simple, yet evocative language—the most vivid being when his grandmother eats *bhakris* made out of millets taken from cow dung, establishing economic inequality as a handmaiden of caste hierarchies.

Even more distressing are the stories of Dalit women; for if men have it bad, the women have it worse. Bama's autobiography—novel '*Karukku*', the first Tamil Dalit text—deals with the experiences of a Dalit woman in a variety of

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social institutions like the village, the family, the education system, the church and the clergy. The caste system has been so deeply ingrained in the Indian psyche that institutions that ought to promote egalitarianism or awareness end up propagating the same distinctions. The stories of individuals such as these function as voices of entire communities of people who have undergone similar experiences of discrimination.

These autobiographies deal not only with the institution of caste as a means of oppression, but also show how economic deprivation and poverty go hand in hand with caste discriminations. Lakshman Gaekwad's The Branded contains one of the most heartrending descriptions of poverty; the author-protagonist eats gruel in which worms float. Other texts like '*Karukku*', '*Koveruk Kazhudaigal*' and '*Outcaste*' also depict the gruelling poverty of Dalit communities. Such stories serve as inspiration for other members in the community to use education to overcome their economic and social conditions.

Biographies and letters of leaders who have influenced the Dalit movement and have served as inspiration are now either being published for the first time or are being republished in English and other languages. Chief among them are, of course, the teachings, letters and lectures of Ambedkar who also appears in many Dalit texts as the person who made an entire generation of Dalits question the social order that subjugated them. *Outcaste* and Baby Kamble's *Our Existence* are two texts where Ambedkar and his teachings have inspired the Dalit movement. A sense of pride: Joseph Macwan's '*Angaliyat*' hails the pragmatism of the Vankar weaving community.

This spurt of writing by Dalits is a kind of social protest where readers become aware of the experiences of the oppressed. These are, however, not the protests of only one group. Although Dalit literature has been criticised for depicting the experiences of mostly the more privileged of the Dalit communities, the various languages show that discrimination and poverty vary a great deal.

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For instance, Limbale's autobiography-novel is about a half-caste (son of an upper-caste father and Mahar mother), *Karukku* is about a Dalit Christian Parayar community and Joseph Macwan's *Angaliyat* deals with the Vankar weaving community of Gujarat. The economic and political means used to propagate the caste system are dramatised in the stories of Valji and Teeha, making it possible to read the novel as a sociological critique.

Unlike Sharan's sense of shame in his culture that comes along with his rise to what '*Angaliyat's*' translator Rita Kothari has called the "Dalit middle-class", *Angaliyat* is filled with a sense of pride at the pragmatism of Vankar customs—especially widow remarriage, which, says Kothari in her introduction, was used to propagate the notion of the Vankars as uncivilised. Apart from these is Lakshman Gaekwad's *The Branded* that tells the story of a tribe commonly seen as a criminal community.

The large number of languages and variety of experiences that the texts portray might have made them inaccessible to a majority of readers were it not for the translations of these works. Many publishing houses are increasingly showing an interest in publishing quality translations of Dalit texts into English. The Macmillan Modern Novels in Translation series had a sub-section, Dalit Literature in Translation. Oxford University Press published the translations of *Angaliyat* and *Akkarmashi* while Penguin, Sahitya Akademi etc., have published translations of Dalit texts. In fact, '*Angaliyat*' was translated into English before it was rendered into any other language.

The translations are of high quality, as seen in Limbale's book by Bhoomkar; the simplicity of language while expanding English to take in Mahar words, as well as the philosophising that Sharan slips into when thinking about the social system that has placed him at the margins. The retention of some Marathi peculiarities like the mandatory 'ya' after names also helps in retaining a regional flavour. Stories of inspiration: Sharan Kumar Limbale's '*The Outcaste*' is a brutal depiction of gruelling poverty.

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Interestingly, the publication of these translations, especially the OUP and Macmillan publications, are also accompanied by a critical introduction that places the text in a literary, sociological and cultural context. These introductions, written by experts in the source languages, make the text more relevant as a literary expression of a social and cultural protest. Special mention should also be made of Navayana, a publishing house launched in Pondicherry devoted entirely to the publication of essays and studies on issues connected to caste, identity and politics—the first of its kind in India. Another support for Dalit texts and their translations comes in the form of awards. Although there is no award exclusively for Dalit literature, many texts have won national awards-Lakshman Mane's *Upara* won the 1984 Marathi Sahitya Akademi while *Angaliyat* won the 1988 Gujarat Sahitya Akademi. The translation of Bama's *Karukku* won the Crossword Translation award in 2000.

What connects all these various texts written in different languages is the sense of awareness of the injustice of the caste system as well as of the social and political institutions that help in propagating it. These books not only raise important questions but also narrate the ability of the people on the margins to fight against all odds. The recent translations and awards have helped in bringing Dalit texts into mainstream visibility while acknowledging them as integral parts of "Indian literature".Caste, and more caste The very name indicates newness: Navayana (new vehicle), finds inspiration from the neo-Buddhism that Dr B.R. Ambedkar embraced. Based in Pondicherry, and founded by activist-theoretician of the Dalit movement Ravikumar and journalist S. Anand, publishing house, Navayana seeks to explore issues that mainstream publishers shy away from.

Mainstream publishers automatically equate caste with Dalit subjects. Navayana, however, shall examine issues of caste hegemony as well as oppression. "Our books will

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interrogate and deconstruct caste supremacy. For instance, one of our books *Brahmans and Cricket* deals with a subject few dare discuss. Caste permeates every aspect of our lives. Yet we talk little of caste." Navayana is about bringing caste out of the closet. The other Navayana books bear testimony to this commitment. *Ambedkar: Autobiographical Notes* features Ambedkar's reminiscences of his experiences of untouchability beginning with an incident when he was nine years old. Philosopher of Science Meera Nanda's Postmodernism and Religious Fundamentalism offers a critique of "Hindu science" and demonstrates how right-wing fundamentalist movements draw upon academically fashionable postmodernism. Touchable Tales debates the trends in publishing and reading Dalit literature through interviews with a range of players including Narendra Jadhav, Mini Krishnan, Gail Omvedt and Arundhati Roy. In today's world dominated by the culture of advertisement, even the miseries of the worker are glamorized. Two thousand years ago when Christ tried to ameliorate the misfortunes of the unprivileged, the shepherd's crook became the symbol of the Messiah's mission. Today bishops still honor this tradition by wearing carrying a crook—made of gold.

All institutions ultimately serve vested interests. It is for this reason that the downtrodden of the earth have grown suspicious of all institutions and movements and insist on preserving their own identities. They do not want to be swallowed up by an ideology or a slogan. Such is the case with the movement called Dalit which started in Western India in the 1960s.

Dalit Literature is the literature of the Untouchables of Maharashtra, of those who are looked down upon even by other workers. The term was first used for the Untouchables in 1930. It is a comprehensive expression which now includes Harijans (such as Mahars), Mangs, Mallas, Chambhars and Pulayas. Dalit is a protest literature against all forms of exploitation based on class, race, caste or occupation.

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The Dalits are treated worse than animals. Their presence is usually banned from upper-class localities. Even then they are bound to hang clay pots from their necks so that they may not pollute the streets of the privileged by their spittle. They carry brooms tied to their bodies so that while passing through such 'upper lanes' they can wipe away their footprints.

Arjum Dangle gives a harrowing picture of their wretchedness in a poem entitled 'Chhavni Hilti Ha', (The Cantonment Has Begun to Shake'). He observes:

> We fought with crows,
>
> Never even giving them the snot from our
> noses.
>
> As we dragged out the Upper Lane's dead
> Cattle,
>
> Skinned it neatly
>
> And shared the meat among ourselves,
>
> They used to love us then.
>
> We warred with jackals—dogs—vultures—
> kites
>
> Because we ate their share.

Dalit has not yet been acknowledged as a literature in its own right, and no reference to it is found in the standard literary journals of India. But its reverberations are now being heard all around the globe. Like the stories of Prem Chand, it creates characters of great sympathy and humanity, humbly asking for their right to civic representation, but no moral or political organization has the courage to openly associate with them.

Dalit should not be confused with Marathi protest literature, because its subjects are very different. For example, the short story by Dr. Surendra Barlinge, chairman of the Sahitya Sanskrit Mandal, 'Mepan Maze', deals with the topic of sex change, a subject which could interest only upper-class readers. Similarly, Padminiraje Patwardhan's story, 'Deepshikha', is about a beautiful

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talented girl, Brahamin by caste, who marries a civil servant.

No doubt these are stories that deal with genuine problems of modern life. But they are not the issues which interest Dalit writers. In their world women are casually stripped and molested, men brutally murdered, and this has been going on for centuries, generation after generation. These are Untouchables who invite death if they dare to quench their thirst from a common pond. Even the Brahamin's god is not their god. He does not accept their supplication. He is not even capable of feeling their misery. Keshav Meshram challenges this god in 'One Day I Cursed That...God', in these words:

> Would you wipe the sweat from your bony body
>
> With your mother's ragged sari?
>
> Would you work as a pimp
>
> To keep her in booze?
>
> O, father, oh, god the father!
>
> You could never do such things.
>
> First you'd need a mother—
>
> One no one honors,
>
> One who toils in the dirt,
>
> One who gives and gives of her love.

A homegrown movement of the Untouchables, is opposed to all notions of caste and class, but it also suspects the intellectuals of the left as well as Marxist ideologues who treat Marxism itself as a dogma rather than a science. Such people assume the role of Marxist pundits, and Untouchables cannot afford to trust pundits. The theoretical variety of revolutionaries cannot even imagine the predicament these wretched people live in. Namde Dhasal cries out:

> This world's socialism,
>
> This world's communism

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And all those things of theirs,

We have put them to the test

And the implication is this—

Only our shadows can cover our own feet.

Their suffering is not just the suffering of the individual, and there is nothing romantic about it. Their problem is neither ideological nor philosophical. They do not seek poetic beauty. Similes, metaphors and symbols are not important. The reality of their life is too hideously shocking, beyond the capacity of fantasy or imagination. Their tragedy is universal, trampling them down and disfiguring their humanity. Narayan Surve makes an ironical comment on the champions of revolution and their rhetoric in his poem, 'Karl Marx':

In my first strike Marx met me thus:

I was holding his banner high on my shoulder.

The other day he stood listening to my speech at the gate, in the meeting, —now we alone are the heroes of history, of all the biographies too, henceforth...

He was the first to applaud, then

laughing boisterously

he put his hand on my shoulder and said:

'Are you a poet or what...

nice...very nice...

I too liked poetry

Goethe was my favorite.

Their bitterness is totally understandable. They have been subjected to the worst atrocities. A young man's thumb may be amputated just so that he does not become a better archer than a lad of the upper class.

These people see the class war that is going on at the global level as irrelevant to their cause. Class war is a long-term struggle. People like themselves have neither the time

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nor the patience to wait for the tide to turn. The verdict of history may come too late. Prabhakar Bangurde spurns such wishful thinking in his poem 'Comrade':

> Don't be in a hurry for revolution.
>
> You are still very small.
>
> Your ability to resist
>
> the atrocities, boycotts and rapes
>
> that go on every moment
>
> has become nil
>
> comrade
>
> Tomorrow's sun is yet to rise
>
> sleep undisturbed until then...

This is their everyday experience that closely ties them to prevailing social conventions, justifying their appalling living conditions in the name of culture and tradition. They are particularly concerned about their daughters who must be married according to strictly imposed custom and lead respectable and pious lives. This must be hard to swallow when they see that 'they strip naked my mother, my sisters' and 'my own daughter's virtue is looted in public/ my eyes look on, my blood shakes'. These are lines taken from a folksong.

But Dalit poetry is not merely protest. There are also the eternal emotions of love and sacrifice reverberating in it, as in this poem, 'Mother', by Warman Nimbalkar:

> Dark, dark slender body—this was my mother.
>
> Drudged in the woods for sticks from morning on.
>
> All we brothers, sitting, waiting, watching for her.
>
> And if she didn't sell the wood, all of us slept hungry.

And one day she died of hard work and left them wailing, through not without leaving a sweetness behind her:

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My eyes seek my mother,
I still grieve,
I see a thin vendor of wood.
I buy her sticks.

Consider this beautiful poem, 'The City', by Daya Pawar. It begins like this:

One day someone dug up a twentieth century city

And ends on this observation.

Here's an interesting inscription:
'This water tap is open to all castes and religions'.
What could it have meant:
That this society was divided?
That some were high while others were low?
Well, all right, then this city deserved burying—
Why did they call it the machine age?
Seems like the Stone Age in the twentieth century.

The Dalit are also burning with a desire for revenge. Their anger is reflected in 'You Wrote From Los Angeles', by Daya Pawar:

In the stores here, in hotels, about the streets,
Indians and curs are measured with the same Yard—stick.
"Niggers! "Blacks! This is the abuse they fling on me.
Reading all this, I felt so damn!
Now you've had a taste of what we've suffered
In this country from generation to generation.

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But though it is the poetry of the oppressed, in it can be heard the echoes of a rebellious soul:

> I'm the sea; I soar, I surge.
>
> I move out to build your tombs.
>
> The winds, storms, sky, earth.
>
> Now all are mine.
>
> In every inch of the rising struggle
>
> I stand erect.

—J.V. Pawar: "I Have Become the Tide".

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6

Distinctive Voices of Distress

— D. Padmarani

Literature always anticipates life, says Oscar Wilde, 'It does not copy it but moulds it to its purpose'. Indian Literature reflects the nuances of various diachronic paroxysms moulded through diverse range of articulations prompted by the varied contours of the Nation. Dalit literature is one such wing of Indian Literature born out of pain and poverty.

The term Dalit encompasses the hapless segment of India : the untouchable communities, Adivasis, nomadic tribes and the suffering masses who were made to lead dehumanized, degraded lives and were denied the basic fundamental rights by the hegemony of the stratified, rigid caste system of Hinduism. The frustration, humiliation, suppression, anguish and revolt felt by this ill-starred, marginalized section of Indian society constitute the dialogics of Dalit literature. The menial jobs like scavenging etc which they were coerced to perform perhaps negated them a cultural, societal and religious niche in the society. In the beginning their protests were mainly subterranean and verbal. They were culturally and religiously comatized and psychologically drugged. But the synchronic study of the contemporary Dalit Literature shows a distinct carnivalisation a notion of Mikhail Bakhtin in which the Other comes to the fore giving expression to that which had been suppressed for so long.

In the distant period of India's past the Dalit panorama though dark, was silhouetted by the twilight

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glimmer of iconoclastic signals flashed against untouchability and Brahmanical hegemony by some religions and persons. Buddhism very vehemently derided caste system and untouchability which endeared it to the downtrodden and had made an energizing impact on Dalit literature. Jainism also condemned untouchability as a hideous tumour of society which had to be removed for its well-being. Charvak came to the aid of the outcastes pouncing heavily on the Karma (Fatalism) theory, rebirth, yagnas, yagas and other caste based duties. Veerasaivam initiated the Dalit literary movement against Brahmanism and fought to give a relevant place to the Dalits.

In the fourteenth century, Ramanand spread the Bhakti Cult. He had disciples of all castes including the Dalits. The Hindi speaking belt of U.P. and Bihar found their ontological roots from the Bhakti movement. The non-brahmanical spiritual leaders like Kabir, Ramdas articulated their messages through folk languages and tried to rebuild the cultural edifice structuring them on the scaffold of equality and fraternity. Tallapaka Annamacharya through his sankirtanas stood firm on the side of Dalits. Chenna, the Dalit was the staunch devotee of Siva in Mallikharjuna Pandit's *Sivatatwasaram*. In *Somalilakadha,* Palkuriki Somanadha affirmed that a Dalit too could be worshipped. Sri Krishna Deva Raya in his *Amuktamalyada* made Dalit his hero in his *Mala Dasari Kadha*. Vemana's Sathakas also are replete with his paradigms of equality.

In the 17th Century, Potuluri Veerabrahmam turned heavily against the blind beliefs in religion and caste discriminations awakening people to the reformist culture. His easy language, novel style made him popular among the commanality. His disciples Siddappa and Kakkayya were Dalits only.

The rudiments of Dalit consciousness perhaps also may be found in Toru Dutt's poem '*Buttoo*'. Many lines in the poem echo the plight of the untouchables. The introduction of Ekalavya is:

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'A hunter's low-born son was he'

The predicament of the low-born at the hands of the upper-castes where he was thrown down by the royal youths was very poignantly depicted,

'As down upon the ground he fell
Not hurt, but made a jest and game:-
He rose, - and waved a proud farewell
But cheek and brow grew red with shame'.

The eternal truths which Toru might have aimed at came out from his articulation,

'What is rank or caste ?
In us is honour or disgrace
Not out of us't was thus he mused
'The question is – not wealth or place,
But gifts well used, or gifts abused'.

Ekalavya goes to the deep forest to learn archery on his own, there he meets the deer.

'They touch me' he exclaimed with joy
They have no pride of caste like men
They shrink not from the hunter-boy;'

Other eminent people who influenced this Dalit Literature were Jyotiba Phule, Narayana Guru, E.V.Ramaswami Nayakar and others. Jyotiba Phule started 'Satyasodhaka' Samajam (1873) and fought for Dalits. His feelings and ideas influenced many people including Dr. Ambedkar who is said to be the 'Manifesto' of Dalit Movement.

This philosophical resignation, psychological subjugation and endurance had continued with the same rhythm till the arrival of the Britishers who brought English education, Anglicization, proselytization into Christianity. The Dalit literature which was till then reformative began to be rebellious.

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The first novel which exposed and satirized the religious bigotry, the hypocrisy and the heartlessness of the caste Hindus and the degraded servility of the outcasts is Mulk Raj Anand's '*Untouchable*'.

The first poem on Dalits in print was '*Achut Kee Shikayat*' (The complaint of the untouchable) composed by Heera Dom in 'Saraswati' published from Allahabad in the year 1914.

Several Meets in many parts of the country like 'Congress Meet in 1917 in Calcutta, 'All India Dalit Meet' in 1924, 'Bahishkrita Hitakarini Meet' in 1924 in Mumbai, the establishment of South India Liberation Samakhya' in 1916 in Tamil Nadu, Karnataka, and Journals like Bengali Dalit Journal, Asmita, Asmita Dharma, Mooknaik, Simhagharjana, Sramik Nivas etc aided in bringing out the various dimensions of the Dalit consciousness and accelerate the axiological revolt of the deprived lot.

In the Northern belt, with the publication of the newspaper 'Achut' Swami Achchutanand, himself a Dalit, who had led the Adi-Andhra Movement in North India, awakened the dormant Dalit vitality through the Bhakti Movement.

Munshi Harihar Prasad Tamtas '*Samta*' (1934) Sohan Lal Sastry's '*Utthan*' (1949) Mevaram Mahashay's '*Jameen Ka Tata*' and a spate of journals and newspapers came out focusing exclusively on the Dalit problem.

Dalit literature was not so blatant till 1967, the impetus of it was got from Karl Marx, the revolutionary trends from Black literature and the ideas of prominent people like Dr. Ambedkar.

Dalit literature has a few prominent streaks common to its utterances. Though its purpose is not to give aesthetic pleasure, a subterranean current of Karuna Rasa is inherent to the works. Acharya Jawdekar wants 'revolt' which is ubiquitous in the contemporary Dalit works to be the 10th Rasa and Yadunath Thatte thinks that 'cry' should be the 11th Rasa in the Dalit works.

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A very strong criticism found in Dalit literature is against Hindu Puranas, Vedic literature, and Hinduism which were supposed to be contrapuntal to the Dalit sentience. The Karma theory (Fatalism) the rebirth theory which linked the Dalits' present neurosis to their misdeeds of their past life were very strongly derided by poets like Gurram Jashua, Ravuri Ekambaram and many others. These poets tried to navigate the society towards logical and sensible interactions with the outcastes. Brahmanism with its cultural and physical angularities is the invariable target of Dalit writers who consider it iniquitous. The 'Holy Thread' worn by the Brahmins was contumely to them. Maddhuri Nagesh Babu in his poem 'Uruvada' (Hometown) advises the Brahmins not to be bound by the Holy Thread but to be bound to the fellowmen with love.

This negation of the Puranas and religion might have led the Dalits towards atheism. The Dalit Writers of Andhra Pradesh seem to be keen on using objectionable language towards Gods and Puranas. Brahma and Manu are the main victims of their wrath. It is said that the caste system came out of Brahmạ; the Brahmins from his mouth, the Kshatriyas from his shoulders, the Vaishyas from his thigh and the Sudras from his feet. This is what made the poets Jashua and M.Venkat question about the place from which these Panchamas (Dalits) were born. Manu and Manu Dharma Sastry are in for a pungent and vitriolic criticism. The other victim of Dalit criticism is Sanskrit language as all the Puranas and Vedas are written in Sanskrit.

Besides these biting, stinging outpourings, the Dalit literature has another facet to affirm Dalits. The writers try to enthuse the Dalits to become united, to fight for self-respect and to assert themselves with self-confidence and courage in all fields. P.C.Ramulu says that it is time for re-writing the history. One prominent feature of Dalit literature is the eulogy of their leaders especially of Dr.Ambedkar. Padmasri Boyi Bheemanna wrote the prayer song –

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Jaya Jaya Jaya Ambedkara

Jaya Jaya Bharata Bhaskara

Satish Chandra's '*Panchamavedam*' is very moving and heart-rending. It is based on a factual incident involving a Dalit student who committed suicide as he was slighted for his caste. Gaddar, Sambasiva Rao and others have brought out the plight of the Dalits, their anguish and humiliation.

Another significant aspect of Dalit Literature is the de-construction of the myths, whose very basis is questioned by the Dalit writers. The Dalits treat Ekalavya as their great grandfather. Shambooka another Dalit in Ramayana, was killed by Rama on the behest of Vasishta just because of his caste. So Dalits worship Shambhooka. K.G.Satyamurthy writes (with the pen-name Sivasagar) in his poem '*Nadustunna Charitra*' (the present history)

Ekalavya is chopping off Drona's thumb

With an axe.

With a smile on his face,

Shambooka is killing Rama.

Bali is trampling Vamana

With his small feet to hell.

Manu is piercing his eyes with needles,

Cut his tongue,

Pouring lead in his ears

Is tossing and turning in the cemeteries.

Dr.Kondapalli Sudarshana Raju in his poem '*Noorella Ambedkar*' says that this country is indebted to the Dalits in many ways. So these reservations are only the interest paid to them. He questions when and how can the country repay the Principal sum to the Dalits.

A bat is believed to bring bad-omen to all. But even a bat can enter a temple whereas a Dalit was denied admittance. Why this humiliation? thunders Jasua in his poem '*Gabbilam*' (Bat)

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Katti Padmarao laments 'when these high caste people are exterminating him without giving him food, clothes, treating him as untouchable, lash him out towards the grave, Mother Bharat is looking nonchalantly laughing. Does she give birth to children or stones ?

In the poem '*Pilupu*' (Invitation) Darbhasayanam Srinivasacharya advises the Dalits to ameliorate their circumstances themselves. Gurajada Apparao was all set to abolish caste discrimations in his '*Malalu*'.

Dalit literature is not devoid of aesthetic aspect too. Enduluri Sudhakar describes the beauty of a Dalit woman who is rushing towards the land with all vigour and vitality with a sickle in her hand. He criticizes the ancient literary works for not making a Dalit woman the heroine.

Many plays were written bringing out the Dalit conflicts and consciousness from all over India. '*Angulimal*'by Periyar Lalayee Singh, '*Shambookvadha*'by Lalayee Singh together with Ram Avtar Singh, Unnava Laxminarayanan's '*Harijan*', Neelakanta Sastry's '*Harijanudu*', Dharmavaram Gopalacharyulu's '*Asprisyavijayam*', Boyee Bhimanna's '*Paleru*' and many other dramas disseminate the various facets of Dalit predicaments. Novels like Laxminarayana's '*Malapalli*', N.R.Nandi's '*Naimisaranyam*' and a profusion of other novels and short stories in different Indian languages try to focus the attention of the public towards the Dalits.

A seminar on Dalit Literature in 1967 organized by Maharastra Sahitya Parishad triggered the controversy as to who actually can write Dalit Literature. Kavi Anil comments that 'Literature written with a sympathetic perspective on Dalit life is Dalit literature. This definition makes a non-Dalit also the writer of Dalit literature. But others firmly say that non-Dalits cannot convey imaginatively the caste-specific experience of the Dalits and that only Dalits by virtue of their birth and suffering gives authentic expression to their consciousness. Then the poignant and heartrending depiction of Dalit and Black neurosis in works like '*Untoucahable*' and '*Uncle Tom's*

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Cabin' by Non-Dalits and Non-Blacks cannot be undermined.

Nirmal Kumar Phadkule and Narhar Karundkar hold that 'A Savarna can also create Dalit literature. For this, it is not necessary that the writer should have been born as untouchable because the basis for Dalit literature does not lie in one's birth in a particular caste. It is in social consciousness'. (P.105, Dalit Literature & Aesthetics, S. Limbale). So Dalit literature is for the Dalits, of the Dalits and may not necessarily be only by Dalits.

Sharankumar Limbale discusses conceptualization of Dalit Literature in his 'Dalit Literature and Aesthetics'. He tries to bring out the uniqueness of Dalit literature in form, purpose and function. Dalit literature is written with the purpose of conveying the anguish and suffering of the Dalits and demands an antidote for it. Its aim is not to teach or preach. It derives its strength through the depiction of hard reality. So the basis for aesthetics of Dalit literature is pain, agony and torture. Limbale affirms that a materialistic yardstick must be evolved to adjudge Dalit Literature. A balanced, positive, unbiased evaluation of Dalit literature is much needed.

But whatever may be the mode of critique, the targeted renaissance of the Dalits seems to be only half-way through despite the Dalit literature's clarion calls of awakening to Dalits and accommodative perspectives to the upper castes. The atrocities and massacres perpetrated on Dalits from various Quarters of India as in Karamchedu and Chuduru of Andhra Pradesh were still going on unabated. 'The Hindu' (21st Oct 2006) reports that 80 Dalit families in kadkol village of Basavanabagewadi taluk in Bijapur District have been boycotted by caste Hindus since 25 July, the day they dared collect water from the village tank. Before that they had no access to the tank, and non-Dalits used to pour water from it into their vessels. The landlords stopped giving them work. Though their children had got measles, the parents with tear-filled eyes said, 'we hardly

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have enough food to feed them, how can we arrange money for medicines'? It is really disheartening that the situation encountered by Dalit families as portrayed in '*Untouchable*' (1935) still exists in certain areas even after several decades.

So it is inevitable that the trumpet call should reach the nooks and corners of the remote areas to smoothen the uneven edges of the societal structure which were anyway not congenital. As soon as the dream of castefree society with equality, liberty, fraternity and justice as its foundation is realized, Dalit literature will have achieved its goal and becomes fossilized like the literature during the freedom movement and partition. Till then with renewed vitality, its onward journey goes on and on sending its invigorating signals to all.

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7

Outcast in Tagore's Poetry

— M.B. Gaijan

> Man's history is waiting in patience for the triumph of the insulted man.
>
> —Tagore: *Collected Poems & Plays*: 328

Tagore is the only Indian poet awarded Nobel Prize for literature in 1913. His poetry is the presentation of his versatile personality. He was manager and organizer, economist and educationist, patriot and social engineer—and always a reconciler and builder, (K.R. Srinivas Iyangar: 5) musician and painter, singer and actor, thinker and preacher. As a poet his focus is mainly on the Indian spirituality, the western rationalism and universally accepted Humanism. Tagore has described every aspect of human life and activity-social, political, religious. (Vishwanath S. Naravane: 57). As a social reformer Tagore has composed a few poems on Untouchables with a view to convince the orthodox Indians to accept the downtrodden people as the tellow human beings with human dignity.

Tagore has used the term "Outcast" instead of the insulting term "Untouchable". Tagore's poetry on "Outcast" can be broadly divided into three parts.

1. The poetry based on the ancient works.
2. The poetry based on the middle age.
3. The poetry based on the 'Outcasts' issues of his time.

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The ancient Indian literature, including the religious *granthas,* indicates that the Outcasts have descended from the Shudra Varna. Among Shudras, the Outcast Shudra gradually became Untouchables. There was a strong social hatred towards them. In the past, in spite of the aversion towards them, a few Outcasts came forward for their Human Rights, like to get equal status as human being. The ancient *granthas* have noted their efforts. Tagore has selected the neglected beings of "The Outcast Community" and composed beautiful poems on them, right from the Upanishadic era.

Tagore has nicely portrayed the Upanishadic incident of "Satyakama Jabala". The poem creates the impression of the Upnishadic era in the minds of readers. It begins thus:

> The hermit boys had brought the cattle home,
>
> And sat round the fire to listen to the Master,
>
> Gautam, when a strange boy came,
>
> And greeted him with fruits and flowers,
>
> And bowing low at his feet,
>
> Spoke in a bird like voice-
>
> "Lord, I have come to thee to be taken
>
> Into the path of the supreme Truth.
>
> My name is Satyakama."

Here Tagore has portrayed Satyakama as a polite, civilized and cultured while it was said that the Outcasts were a group of the uncivilized and uncultured. Here the way of Satyakama's request "Spoke in bird like voice"— appeals to the every human heart.

But in the next line Tagore has presented the social reality of that time, the academic monopoly of the Brahmins: "It is only fitting for a Brahmin to aspire to the highest wisdom."

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For the highest knowledge, Outcasts were not allowed. They had to perform their ancestral jobs. The birth based social status was very important factor for the livelihood of an individual. After getting the reply from Gautama, Satyakama went to his mother to know his blood His mother Jabala frankly replied:

> "In my youth I was poor and had
> Many masters. Thou didst come to
> Thy mother Jabala's arms. My
> darling who had no husband."

Nicely presented, the dialogue presents the crude reality of that time. During that time the illegitimate children and their mothers were condemned as Outcasts and these Outcasts had no right to come forward in any field.

The poet further describes that, after getting the truth of his birth, Satyakama returned to Gautama and informed him in the presence of other disciples. The poet has described the strange reaction among them. The social hatred towards the Outcast is thus pictured; "The students muttered at the shameless insolence of that Outcast"

For the awakened people, the human virtues are not restricted to any caste, class, creed or race. Here Gautama is described as an awakened being, who accepts the Outcast thus;

> Took the boy to his bosom, and said;
> Best of all Brahmins art thou,
> My child, thou hast the noblest
> Heritage of truth."

(*Collected Poems & Plays*: 209)

The poet does not only beautifully portray this Upanishadic story of an Outcast; he has highlighted the human virtues of an Outcast. The poet has directly suggested that virtue has no connection with blood or any social division. Here Satyakama is portrayed as curious and a follower of truth mat are the essential qualities of being

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a good person. And this sort of individual is always accepted by the awakened like Gautam.

There was untouchability during the Buddhist era though it was practised between outcast Chandals and Brahmin. But there was disgust towards me servile caste. (Tagore: Harijan: Sept. 2. 1933) Tagore has composed poem on the servile castes of the Buddhist era. It is a story of Sudas. The poem begins thus;

> "Sudas, the gardener, plucked from his tank
>
> The last lotus left by the ravage of winter
>
> And went to sell it to the king at the
>
> Palace gate."

In the next lines Tagore has described the arrival of the traveller who wished to offer the lotus to the Lord Buddha, Sudas demanded "One golden Masha" for it. The poet further describes; at that moment the king came out and also whished to offer the flower to the Lord Buddha. Both, the traveller and the king, wished to pay the asked amount. They wished to lay the lotus at the feet of Buddha. It is beautifully presented. Tagore has realistically presented the psycho reaction of Sudas; "I cannot sell this lotus; but himself wished to offer it to Lord Buddha." Further, the poet has described the divine beauty of Buddha:"

> "Whose lips sat the silence of love and whose
>
> Eyes beamed peace like the morning
>
> Star of the dew—washed autumn."

The last two lines are very realistic and appealing;

> "Buddha smiled and asked" what is your wish, my son?
>
> Sudas cried, the least touch of your feet."

(*Collected Poems & Plays*: 184)

According to the social code of that time, the servile caste had no right to touch the awakened being. But, for

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Buddha all were equal. He had strongly criticized the unequal code and preached the egalitarian thoughts. He explained that not by mere lineage one becomes a Brahmin or an Outcast but by the deeds one becomes a Brahmin or an Outcast. And he accepted Sudas.

Tagore has typically poeticized both these the stories on Outcast, with a view to accepting the insulted as fellow human beings.

Bhakti trend was a remarkable phenomenon of the middle age in India. The saint-poets of that time had contributed their mite to remove the cast based centuries old social disparity. The saint–poets from the Outcast community had also contributed a lot to reform the society and highlighted the humanitarian philosophy. Their contribution is considerable in the history of Indian literature. As a part of his morally accepted job to highlight the human virtues of Outcast, Tagore has composed some poems on the Middle-Age-poets. Guru Ramanada was the awakened being from the upper cast who had accepted Outcasts as human beings. Tagore has composed poems on him and his outcast disciples. Later on Ramanada's disciples Kabir and Raidas became famous poets. Ramananda had also accepted Bhajan, a tanner, as his follower. Tagore's poem "The Sacred Touch" presents the thought of equality. The poem begins thus;

"At the dusk of early dawn, Ramananda,
The great Brahmin Teacher, stood in
The sacred water of Ganges
Waiting long for the cleansing touch
Of the stream to flow over his heart.
He wondered why it was not granted him
This morning."

The poet says that something unexpected happened. In the next lines the poet has described the morning and the activities of the persons like fisherman and milkmaid. Further, the poet describes how the Guru left the water and

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started walking towards the outcast colony. Tagore realistically portrays it:

"He reached the lane which took him to
The evil smelling village of the
Tanners where lean dogs were
Crunching bones at the wayside
And kites swooped down upon
Casual morsels of flesh."

In this colony, at a particular cottage door, the tanner Bhajan was working under the tamarind tree at the camel's saddle. When he saw the Guru, he bowed before him from the distance. Tagore has presented nicely the behaviour of the tanner. In the next lines Tagore has portrayed the acceptance of an Outcast as a human being;

"Ramananda drew him to his heart and
Bhajan, his eyes filled with tears,
Cried in dismay, "Master, why
Bringset upon thee such pollution!"

In reply to that the Guru says:

"While on my way to my bath
I shunned your village and
Thus my heart missed the blessings
Of the Ganges whose mother's love
Is for all".

By these lines the poet wants to suggest that the insult of the oppressed is opposed even by the nature.

During the middle ages, Untouchability was strictly practised in the society. It was believed the touch of Untouchable would defile the Touchables, even the shadow of Untouchable would spoil their caste status. In this sort of social circumstances Ramananda accepted Untouchables as fellow human beings. Tagore has used these lines for their acceptance;

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"...at the touch of your body with mine and I am purified."

Here Tagore has presented the greatness of the Guru. To convince the equality among all human beings the poet has used the following lines, uttered by the Guru:

> 'The Divine person who is in thee is
>
> Also within me but why do I
>
> Not met thee in my mind?"
>
> At the end of the poem, Ramananda says'
>
> "...there is no need for me today to go to the temple."

(Poems: Rabindranath Tagore: 146)

Thereby, Tagore has again tried to explain the human equality. This poem was published in Gandhi's *Harijan* (25 March 1933).

Tagore's another poem on Outcast was published in *Harijan* on 20th May 1933. The title of the poem is "Sweet Mercy". It begins thus:

> Raidas, the sweeper, was tanner by caste
>
> Whose touch was shunned by the wayfarers
>
> and the crowded streets were lonely for him.

Here, the poet realistically describes Untouchability. In the next lines the meeting of Ramanada is described;

Raidas bowed down from distance. Guru asked him:

> "Who arc you my friend?"

In response to that Raidas says:

> "I am mere dust dry and barren
>
> troddendown by despising days and nights!"

These lines are not only used for Raidas but they present how the vast untouchable community was living. In the next lines the poet describes, how Raidas asks for mercy to be showered on him. And the consequences are presented thus:

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"Master took him to breast
Pouring on him lavish love
Which made a storm of songs
To burst across the heart of Raidas.
The sweeper."

(*Harijan*, 25 March 1933.)

In this poem Tagore has shown how the tanner was accepted as a human being and he became the famous saint poet.

Because of his simplicity and spirituality he became Guru among Touchables and Untouchables. The Rani Jhali of Chitore became his disciple. Tagore has selected the idea and composed poem to honour the Outcast. Its title is "The Sweeper." Raidas' song touches the Rani's heart and later on, she accepts him as Guru. Tagore has described it thus:

"Raidas who guided her to God's presence."

In the next lines, the poet has described the reality of that time, the dominance of the upper castes. The Brahmin priests opposed and rebuked her for being a disciple of an outcast Tagore has rightly described the way of living life of Brahmins and their going away from the spiritual works. Rani says:

"Brahmin, while you were busy tying your
Purse strings of custom even tighter,
Love's gold slipped unnoticed to the earth,
And my Master in his divine humility
Has plucked it up tram the dust."

At the end of the poem, Tagore has nicely presented the historical matter of Rani's rejection of Brahmin Priest as Guru and acceptance of the sweeper as the master. Here Tagore has presented an Outcast as the master because of his spiritual advancement. The advancement is not confined within any social division.

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Guru Ramananda had another disciple from Outcast community. He is Kabir, the well know mystic poet and social reformer. Tagore has translated Kabir's 100 poems in English. Here, Tagore's poem on Kabir begins thus:

> "Kabir, the weaver, was favoured of God,
> And the crowd flocked round him,
> For medicine and miracles."

In the next lines the poet has described the social reality of that time. Being a member of Outcaste community, he became the victim of the upper casts' insult and conspiracy. Tagore further presents the priests of that time: "Envious of the repute of this outcaste." Tagore portrayed it thus:

> "The woman grasped his hand,
> Blaming him for being faithless,
> And followed him to his house.
> Saying she would not be forsaken."

But she could not stand long before the saint. It is portrayed that she had realized her sin. As a repentance of her wrong deed, she says "save me from my sin!"

The poet has shown that Kabir had worked at the loom and sang songs for her:

> 'To wash the stains from that woman's heart."

In the next stanza, Tagore has pictured the conspiracy of the courtiers to insult the Outcaste in the court. It is thus presented:

> "The king and his courtiers started at
> The sight of Kabir when he entered the hall.
> For he was not alone, the woman followed him."

The woman was harlot, once sent by the priests to disgrace Kabir. On their arrival the courtiers reacted strangely;

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"Some smiled, some frowned,
And the king's face darkened at the
Beggar's pride and shamelessness."

At the end of the poem, Tagore has raised Kabir as a generous saint. The woman had realized that Kabir was insulted in the court only because of her. She wished to go back. Tagore has portrayed the incident, Kabir says;

I dare not turn my God any when
He comes branded with insult"
(Collected Poems & Plays: 442)

As a humanitarian, Tagore has uplifted two downtroddens, an outcast and the exploited woman.

In his poem on Raidas, Kabir and Bhajan, Tagore has emphasized the human virtues of the Outcasts. It is also portrayed that they become the victims of social evils yet they didn't give up the virtues. By presenting these three figures from outcast community, Tagore again advocates "the human virtues cannot be confined within any barrier."

Tagore's poem on Outcast's issues of his time was mainly composed during 1933, and was published in Gandhi's *Harijan*. This duration was very significant in the history of Outcasts' struggle for Human Rights. Gandhi and Ambedkar both were struggling in different ways for the same goal. Tagore has contributed to raise the issue in his own way. He has started his job since 1910.

To convince his humanitarian ideas, he says God is always with the abject, downtrodden. In one of the Gitanjali poem, he describes the presence of God.

"Here is thy footstool and there rest
thy feet where live the poorest and
lowliest, and lost"

During 1910, Outcasts were the biggest mass of the poorest, lowliest and lost. To explain the importance of Outcast as human being, the poet thus describes at the end of the poem:

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My heart can never find its way to
Where thou keepest company with the
Companionless among the poorest
The lowliest and the lost."

(Collected Poems & Plays: 6)

The poet says openly that if one wants to reach God, one must first go to the abject. Here religious matter is taken as a medium to reach the downtrodden.

Not only the acceptance of the abject is enough for Tagore, he emphasized on the unity among Indians for the progress and the prosperity of the Motherland. In 1910, in one of his Gitanjali poems, he says thus:

"Come Ye Aryans, come non-Aryans
Hindu, Muslim, Come all; Come ye
English, come Ye Christian come
Brahmin, cleanse your mind and
Hold others by the hand;
Come Ye Outcast, come Ye lowly ones
Fling away your load of shame!
Come, one and all, to the mother's
Crowning come fill the sacred bowl
And let all-Unite and consecrate the
Waters on the shore of vast
Humanity that is India."

(Tagore for You: 150)

Here the poet has welcomed the Outcast for the nation's progress, not because of sympathy towards them but they are welcomed as fellow countrymen. Tagore has used two lines to give message to the Outcasts that they should come out from the inferiority complex and live with self-respect.

In another poem on a painter, the poet says, the painter makes pictures of men and things; the painter made the sketch of the colony of Outcaste:

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> "Its crowd of rustic roofs, and an empty field in the Background scorched by the angry April sun.'

The portrait of the colony describes the real situation of the community:

> "They are there, and we started up and said indeed they."

(Poems: Rabindranath Togore: 166)

Further, the poet indicates the small error of the painter. The painter has not pictured the commonplace beast, goat, which is compared with the mythological steed of paradise. It is described by Tagore that a small animal has a big importance in Outcasts' homes.

Tagore's view on Outcasts' Human Rights was different from Gandhi. He was completely in accord with Gandhis' Charkha Cult. Similarly he was against on Gandhis' fast for Guru Vayyur Temple issue. In his letter to Gandhi, Tagore has openly declared his disagreement:

> "It is needless to say that I do not at all relish the idea of divinity being enclosed in a brick and mortar temple for the special purpose of exploitation by a particulaı group of people. I strongly believe that it is possible for the simple hearted people to realize the presence of God in the open air, in a surrounding free from all artificial obstruction. We know a sect in Bengal, illiterate and not dominated by Brahminica! tradition, who enjoy a perfect freedom of worship profoundly universal in character. It was the prohibition for them to enter temples that has helped them in their purity of realization."

(Mahatma & The Poet: 139)

To strengthen his thoughts on Temple entry issue, Tagore has composed the poetry "Shunned at the Temple Gates." The poetry begins thus:

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"Shunned at the, Temple gates
by the pious,
the outcasts,
and uninitiates,
seek their God
beyond the artificial,
inwardly,
In midnight skies,
In forest flowers,
In love,
And separation.
Their image of God
Is not manhandled
Or imprisoned by temple—walls.
Along the edge of the Padma,
Whose waves sweep away
Old temples,
I have seen one of them
Alone with his 'Ektara'
Seeking his soul's companion
Through songs.
"I am an—outcast
Whose offerings cannot reach
The imprisoned God."

In the next lines, the poet has presented that the priest asks questions about Outcasts' way of getting God. Here, Tagore has used "I" for an Outcast. An Outcast says that I worship my God outside the temple gates because:

"I am the outcast, the uninitiate.
Born in the household of exile,
I was rejected by the respectable."

The poet further describes that after rejected by the respectable, an Outcast finds his God out of the temple;

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"I pursued my fancies
At the crossing of the roads.
For their worship they plucked
Flowers prescribed by scripture
And left for me and my God
The garden of blossoms
Blessed by the sun.
By the contempt of the pious
I was thrust
Into die arms of Man.
And I found solitary friends
Whose light and voice
Made history.
The heroes and Sages
Who made death divine
Are my associates'.
They are seekers after truth
And inheritors of life.

At the end of the poem, Tagcre has dignified an Outcast, who once rejected from the temple gates:

I am blessed
Who have known You
In die fellowship
Of sons of the immortal,
Even I the outcast the uninitiated,
Whose offerings are
To him in the Heavens,
And to the inner Man in me,
Whose love is joy for ever."

(Tagore for You: 159)

Tagore has criticized the way of orthodox upper caste to get God and he has dignified the way of an Outcaste to

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get God. His two famous poems, one "Outcaste, the Cleanser" and "The Great Equality" were published in 1933, in *Harijan.* Like an activist, Tagore has composed the poem, "the Great equality." It is an intense warning to the orthodox Indians. It begins thus;

"Proud casteman of my unfortunate country!
Throw aside your pride of caste,
Lest on your unwilling head,
Should be heaped the burning insults
That you now shower on other.
You have deprived the outcastes;
Of the common rights of man.
With your very eyes
You have beheld their misery.
And yet you refused to take them to your heart
But remember, please do remember:
Someday you shall have to be
The equal of them all in ignominy.

By contemptuously shunning the
Touch of your fellow men
You have insulted the lord of creation.
And as a punishment from on high,
You shall have to share their crumbs.
At times of famine and starvation.
But remember, please do remember,
Some day you shall have to be,
The equal of them all in ignominy.

You have stifled your own power

When you pushed aside your brothers,

And trampled them under your haughty feet
But you never, never can be saved
Until you have fully abased yourself
To their state of inglorious existence.
But remember, please do remember
Someday you shall have to be
The equal of them all in ignominy.

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Proud castman of my unfortunate country!
They whom you so joyfully trample under your feet
Will drag you down to the spot
Where they lie humbled today;
They to whom you deny advancement
Themselves shall block your progress.
They whom you are forcibly holding
In the darkness of ignorance,
Have already menaced your welfare
By the enormity of the abysmal darkness
Of their own colossal ignorance.
But remember, please do remember;
Some day you shall have to be
The equal of them all in ignominy.

For centuries you have humiliated.

These children of God.

By the impudence of your pride of caste;

And you still fail to bow low

To the divinity that is in them.

Why do you not bend your head,

And open your eyes to see

The God of the poor and the helpless

Dwelling in the dust where grovels.

The victims of your suicidal pride.

But remember, please do remember;
Some day you shall have to be
The equal of them all in ignominy.

Proud caste man of my unfortunate country
Can you not see the messenger of death,
Standing before your door?
Can you not hear the curses.
He muttered on your sinful pride of caste?
And your criminal arrogance of class?
If you cannot embrace.
All with love,
Then step aside, do step aside

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And cover your self tight,
With the blankets of your pompous pride.
But remember, please do remember
After death you shall have to be
The equal of them all in the almighty,
ultimate ashes of your body."

(*Harijan,* 5th August, 1933)

Each and every line of the poem is meaningful and revolutionary. Tagore has strongly opposed the hypocrisy of proud castman of our country.

Now in the beginning of the 21st century, when caste plays very dominant role in Indian society, at that time, Tagore's poems prove to be a better suggestion to the cast-based shallow minded mobs.

To sum up, the poet has not portrayed Outcast as miserable, pitiable or helpless. Their condition, portrayed by him, is no doubt pitiable but it is created by the orthodox Indians. Materially they are very poor but inwardly they are wealthier. Tagore has highly praised their human virtues in their wretched situation. The poet has his own way to raise the issue, different from Gandhi. He has not anywhere used Gandhi's term 'Harijan' far Outcaste. He has boldly exposed the hypocrisy of the orthodox and openly threatened for their 'crime' towards fellow beings. In his poems, the poet has consciously and earnestly tried to raise the issue of the insulted community.

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8

From Erasure to Assertion: The Othered and Unempowered in Mulk Raj Anand

— Dr. Sunita Sinha

Dalit literature represents a powerful emerging trend in the Indian literary scene. With the growing translation of works by Dalit writers from various regional languages into English, Dalit literature is poised to acquire a national and international presence. In the unashamed description of the traumas of being an "Untouchable" and target of upper caste ideology its texts question the institutions that have placed them at the margins. In an age where the awareness of Human Rights is a major issue, the literary depiction of the marginalized groups of people becomes very significant. The recent spurt of the growing corpus of Dalit literature attempts to emphasize the experiences of discrimination, violence and poverty of Dalit. The phenomenal growth in Dalit writing is a part of a growing need of the Dalits themselves to articulate their experiences.

Having begun in Maharastra and Gujarat, Dalit literature has today taken a substantial shape in a variety of Indian languages such as Kannada, Tamil, Hindi and Malyalam.

Dr. B. R. Ambedkar, a champion of Dalit's rights has beautifully summed up the essence of Dalit literature:

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"My final words of advice to you is educate, agitate and organize; have faith in yourself. With justice on our side I do not see how we can lose our battle. For ours is a battle not for wealth or power. It is a battle for freedom. It is a battle for the reclamation of the human personality."

Compared to Zola or Balzac, Mulk Raj Anand emerges on the scene of Indo-Anglian literature, as a crusader against social exploitation. The eminence of Anand's fictional art lies in the realistic portrayal of the abject plight of the suffering masses and his writings abound with the essential human sympathy. His writings provide a panoramic view of the rural life in India with all it's merits and drawbacks. His thorough knowledge of the masses and their plight gives him an added advantage in painting the peasant life with vividness of description. It is this photographic presentation which makes his fictional themes more appealing. Though, his characters such as Bakha, in **Untouchable**, Munoo in **Coolie** or Gangu in **Two Leaves and A Bud** are his own powerful creations, they rise above the limited confines of the thematic sphere and strongly stand for a social cause.

Mulk Raj Anand's fiction is shaped and moulded by, as he says, "the double burden on my shoulder, the Alps of the European tradition and the Himalayas of my Indian past."[1] He is, on one hand, critical of the deadwood of the hoary Indian tradition characterized by obscurantism and aware on the other of its finer and enduring aspects. But Anand has derived his fervent socialist faith from the European tradition and this inculcated upon him a vision of modem egalitarian society. His novels faithfully chronicle his eclectic humanism and humanitarian compassion for the underdog. To fan his socialist view, Anand has shackled himself to political evangelism and has taken it upon himself to advocate the downtrodden and the underprivileged. It has been Anand's self conscious effort "to transform the material of life freely into communicable forms, rather than accept the mould of the objective form of Flaubert or Henry James' preciousness."[2]

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Anand has always written to emphasize the essential dignity of man, despite his weaknesses, and to engender compassion for the downtrodden:

"Most of the critics who have written about my novels, have not noticed that my fictions arose from the compulsions of life of the lower depths, where the rejected in our country have been condemned to live. I have reenacted their tragedies again and again."[3]

As Anand states—"I wished to create the folk, whom I knew intimately from the lower depths, the lumpens and the suppressed, oppressed, repressed, those who had seldom appeared in our literatures, except in Sarat Chatterjee, Prem Chand, Bibhuti, Tarashankar and Maneck Bannerji."[4] For Anand, every insult, every humiliation, every deprivation must be protested, only in the defense of the divine status of human beings have we the opportunity to end the alienation of men and women from themselves and from each other."[5] In his **Apology for Heroism**, Anand has himself stated – "The theme of my work is the whole man and the whole gamut of human relationships, rather than only one single part of it."[6] All his works centre on a truly humanist art and a truly humane view of experience.

At his best, Anand's humanist convictions and his humanitarian compassion have fired his imagination and have given us unforgettable scenes such as Bakha touching the caste Hindu and paying the penalty; Ananta being knocked down dead on the machine which he loves; Munoo's traumatic realization that he is born to be exploited and ignorant rustics enthusiastically accepting modernity, when they are convinced that is rather a new avatar of an age-old deity.

Mulk Raj Anand laments the analysis of novels which "ignore the pressures of human life, the compulsions on the writer's conscience, which may be occasioned by miscellaneous inspirations"[7] and traces a "new kind of religion...emerging in my (his) novels, a religion of love for people, which has been called Mulk's humanism."[8] He

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further says, "Worship of each character became a passion behind the writing. I accepted all the strengths and weaknesses of the people."[9] All his major novels, **Untouchable, Coolie** and **Two Leaves and a Bud** are in unequivocal terms, a crusade against social exploitation.

In preface of **Ways of Escape,** Graham Greene has a revealing sentence —

> "Writing is a form of therapy: sometimes I wonder how all those who do not write, compose, or paint can manage to escape the madness, the melancholia, the panic fear which is inherent in the human situation."

Like Greene, Hemingway, Faulkner, Sartre, Kafka, Camus and Malraux, Mulk Raj Anand, the pioneer of Indo-English fiction too, writes out of the central human situation.

Widely read in both British and continental fiction, Anand has been drawn particularly to the Russian writers, to Gorky, to Tolstoy and Dostoevsky particularly due to their experiment with form and because of their interest in character motivation and also due to their dedication "to the single passion of the growth of the individual man."[11] The same idea of quest and the struggle to become a self are among the central themes of Mulk Raj Anand's creative work. Anand understands the imaginative writer's task to be the fictive embodiment of the personal quest for selfhood, the creative rendering of his own and others struggle to become. As a modern novelist, he has insisted in his fiction that the individual is the basis for arriving at an understanding of man's plight—

"The twentieth century is a great turning point in human history. And though our main struggle remains the search for individual values, in so far as these are increasingly open to re-interpretation and discussion, it is necessary to explore the sensibilities of all human beings whether in the factory, in the village square, or in the drawing room...."[12]

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Various scholars have perceived 'an emergent connection between my life and my writings, throughout my creative career,'[13] says Anand. Anand's experiments with his craft reveal his efforts to transform felt experience into art. Sweeping in scope, **The Seven Ages Of Man** is simultaneously epic and autobiographical fiction. Krishan's saga as expressed in the four novels of **The Seven Ages Of Man** embodies the young Anand's own life experiences and also remains an allegory of the stages in the lives of human beings generally. Anand's creative art however, is firmly established on what Jack Lindsay calls, 'the element of deep human feeling and large-scale vision.'[14]

In his autobiography **Apology for Heroism** Anand states—

> "In so far as life inevitably contains a surplus which overflows, making a person touch ...others at the centers, the imaginative expression of an artist becomes the expression of the inner self of other human beings generally."[15]

Further in **Apology for Heroism** Anand says—"The form of creative writing, which is the novel, came to me much more naturally than any other form, because through this I could live through the experiences of other people."[16] Anand has often acknowledged his debt to Joyce's **Portrait Of The Artist as a Young Man**. Like, Stephen Dedalus, Krishan's quest for consciousness cannot be separated from big attempt to forge his artistic identity and Krishan, like Stephen and Anand turns from writing philosophy to writing literature-poetry and then fiction. The autobiographical impulse behind his novels aims not only at introspection but the search is for 'human minimums,' and the struggle is to "mirror struggle itself in books which may be more than oneself."[17]

Mulk Raj Anand's novel, **Untouchable** is called the creative manifesto of Dalits in India. The character of Bakha in the novel is drawn from the lowest caste of Indian

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society. Despite his unpromising station in life, the central figure in the novel operates at a variety of levels in order to critique the status quo of caste in India. Though, aware of his position at the nadir of Indian society, Bakha is able to interrogate issues well above his station in life, such as caste and its inequities, economics and the role of the colonizer. Anand examines issues like society's revulsion at untouchability, some innate societal sympathy for Bakha's plight and the fact that in 1930's Gandhi used Untouchable as symbol for change in Indian society.

The novel **Untouchable** is about the life of an Outcaste Bakha, a young sweeper living in the outcaste's colony of a cantonment set in North India. The colony becomes the living symbol of the age old practice of the sin of untouchability with pseudo - religious vigour. The life in the town and a cantonment with all its colours and smells, the chants and the noises, the filth and the cruelty, the kindness and the humanity, the shifting scenes in the temple, the market-place and the playground, with the quiet of the hillside and the stir of the public meeting, is described with so uncanny an accuracy that **Untouchable** strikes us as a picture of a place, of a society, of a custom and of certain persons not to be forgotten. The picture has acquired the force of an indictment of the evils of the decadent and perverted orthodoxy. By addressing himself to the task of giving expression to certain evils, Anand has to some extent acquired the effectiveness of Dickens.

Bakha is destined to remain a victim of social and religious determinism, a system that has bonded him since his birth which itself strips him of the courage to rebel against the combined forces of religion and culture. In this novel, Anand presented a powerful critique of the Indian caste system and British colonial domination of India, which has actually increased the suffering of outcastes such as Bakha. The novel narrates a day in the life of Bakha and the hardships that he has to face in the course of the day. Bakha is comparatively clean for a sweeper, he does his job efficiently and the hard toil makes him very strong. Each

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muscle of his body, hard as rock when it came to play, seemed to shine forth like glass, 'What a dexterous workman' the onlooker would have said. And though his job was dirty, he remained comparatively clean. Bakha develops a feeling of loathsomeness at his miserable situation; and his tender heart is filled with indignant hatred at the caste Hindus when he is punished for accidentally touching a man in the street on the charge of polluting him. Sohini, Bakha's sister; faces the same fate in the novel. Kalinath, the temple priest, attempts to molest her and when she rejects his advances, the debased priest vindictively accuses her of having polluted him.

As the novel progresses, though he does not find any sign of hope towards a shadow of progress in his miserable situation, he gets three possible solutions to the problem from three different angles - from a missionary to become a Christian, from the inspiring speech of Gandhiji to fight out untouchability and from a young poet who suggests improved sanitation as the only way to drive out untouchability. At the end of the novel, Bakha is found, "thinking of everything he has heard, though he could not understand it all."[18] Anand chooses to dose the final scene of his novel by appropriating the inner conflict of Bakha and juxtaposing 'enthusiasm' with 'naivete.' It carries a strong sense of hope, self-awareness and self-appropriation of the individual within the greater hope of Hindu society there is a strong indication of what Bakha has endured throughout his day's journey has had an enormous effect on the way he appropriates himself within his own culture. The novel thus ends on a somewhat positive note, with the image of Bakha going home and vocalizing his story hoping that some sort of resolution, or at least, some emergence of understanding will occur. The dilemma of the Untouchables can be beautifully epitomized in Arnold's lines—

"Wavering between the two world's, one dead, other powerless to be born,

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With nowhere to rest my head,
Like these, on earth I wait forlorn."[19]

Thus in a small space, the author presents a world, which mobilizes notions, which were until now regarded as immutable. In only 157 pages and one Joycean textual day, the author has fore grounded a remarkable breadth of issues.

Just as **Untouchable** is a socially conscious novel, **Coolie** is politically conscious novel. Anand's humanism, his concern for, his "compassion for the underdog and his indignation at the exploitation of the Indian by the forces of capitalism, industrialism, communalism and racism, invest these two novels with a great power, so long as his artistic control over his material does not slacken."[20]

Coolie tells the story of the experiences of Munoo an orphan, from the time he leaves his village in the Punjab till he dies of consumption in Shimla. Anand's aim in **Coolie** is to bring home to the reader, the living conditions of the poor and the heartlessness of the rich and it also suggests that the true comradeship of man for man exists only among the poor people. The action of the novel spreads over some years and moves from village—to town, from town to city, thence to Bombay and from thence to Shimla. Coolie is what is called a character novel, for it extends primarily in space. We find ourselves, too, moving with the hill boy, Munoo and following his fortunes or rather his misfortunes. Munoo's character is drawn in the image of a childhood playmate of Anand's.

Munoo is forced to leave the village in Kangra valley to work and see the world around him. His first contact with reality shatters his dream of bettering his life. Arriving in the house of a minor bank clerk, he incurs the wrath of a shrewish and vindictive housewife. Before fleeing from the frenzied rage of his employers he wreaked vengeance by relieving himself near their doorsteps, thus lowering their social prestige. Then he gets employed at a primitive pickle and jam factory. The proprietor who has befriended him is

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reduced to a bankruptcy because of his partner. Munoo is once again thrown onto the street to resort to his old profession of a coolie. He faces a desperate competition from other coolies, seeking for a chance to become a beast of burden. A circus elephant-trainer rescues him from this struggle and helps him to reach Bombay, where he attaches himself to a vagrant family to become one of the workers in a cotton mill. He sweats out his living in appalling working condition in leaky straw huts and, when these are washed away by the monsoon then in dilapidated tenement houses. He makes friends, has his first glimpse of life in a red-light area and witnesses a Hindu-Muslim feud instigated by the bosses to break the impending strike. Finally, he is knocked down by the car of an Anglo-Indian woman. The Anglo-Indian woman takes him over to Shimla to make him her servant. Here he dies of tuberculosis, the disease caused and aggravated by his having to pull a rickshaw for his mistress. He dies, watching the peaceful hills and valleys he has abandoned for the plains.

The pace of writing, as in **Untouchable**, is swift and the scenes follow in quick succession. The novel is verily a cross-section of the horrible and the holy, the inhuman and the humane, the sordid and the beautiful. The general effect is panoramic, as good and evil are thrown together, as in a real life. But we are not allowed time to ponder on the general effect, for we find ourselves constantly shifted and engulfed by a new situation at every turn and confronted with new cruelties and absurdities. Munoo represents all the downtrodden who are exploited all the time, one 'way and the other, by the socially privileged. As is Bakha of **Untouchable**, Munoo is a passive character always acted upon. What is common between Bakha and Munoo is their active warmheartedness, their sense of gratitude for the least show of kindness and particularly their desire to emulate the sahibs. But Munoo is the more attractive of the two and his attractiveness owes itself to his curiosity and zest for life. But he could not attain to the status of a tragic

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hero. With his death nothing but his zest for life is lost. But we can't help grieving over his death caused at human machination.

A powerful critique of British colonialisation of India — **Coolie**, beautifully describes the trauma suffered by those at the bottom rung of India's complex social hierarchy. With nothing to hope for, their common humanity is all they possess. The relationship between Munoo and other factory employees is tinged with humaneness. We are at the same time treated to another picture depicted on a different scale, a picture of a different world characterized by unrestrained hysteria, devoid of self-respect. The picture of the world is best illustrated when Prabha, the proprietor of the primitive pickle and jam factory, goes bankrupt and is beleaguered by his creditors. They shout obscenities and fight among themselves for what little might still be got from auctioning the property.

In **Two Leaves and a Bud** Anand continued his series of socially conscious novels, which shared much with the proletarian novels published in Britain and United States during the 1930s. Anand's humanistic stance, acquires greater momentum and stronger intensity in **Two Leaves and a Bud**. It is a faithful depiction of the theme of exploitation of the poor peasant on an elaborate scale and points the class conflict between the poor Indian workers in tea plantations and the owners of the tea plantation. The conflict is between the rich and the poor, the exploiters and the exploited, the humble and the cruel forces, the natives and the foreigners - a confrontation between the East and the West. It is this East West encounter that makes the novel all the more powerful and it is this racial conflict that lends greater significance to the novel, while the thematic concern with exploitation makes it universal.

Gangu, the central character can never be dishonest and deceitful and that is why he loses all his ancestral property in scrupulously clearing all the debts. Tempted by Sardar Buta to quit his village in the Punjab for the tea

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plantation with attractive promises Gangu goes to the distant Macpherson Tea Estate in the Assam valley. To his total disappointment, he finds the place, a virtual prison and the land promised to him turns out to be an elusive bait. Due to unhealthy and starving conditions, Gangu's wife falls ill and dies. After his wife's death Gangu's life centered around his daughter, when Reggie Hunt, the unscrupulous Assistant Manager tries to rape his daughter and when Gangu comes to her rescue he is shot dead and the novelists crusade against injustice becomes more emphatic when the jury finds him "not guilty on the charge of murder and culpable homicide."

Angular and sharp is the characterization, as in the indictment of an inhuman system that blurs the lines of humanity in the picture. But the intellectual framework of the novel thrives over the human content and reminds us of Forster's novel, **A Passage to India**, in which hovers the atmosphere of suspicion and strife and racial intolerance and antagonism; there is the small talk in the club, the reign of prejudice and unreason. In portraying Reggie and other very unpleasant characters, Anand's writing is infiltrated with disgust and hate. Kamala Das said as a reaction to the reading of **Two leaves and A Bud and Coolie**; the two novels "had done their job as neatly as an assassin's knife, killing in me the desire to remain ensconced in the feudalistic society of my home town and just as the knife lies abandoned after the deed is done, the books lay forgotten. Only their message flowed in my veins, causing a rage to rise whenever a labourer was flogged by an irate relative or when a pregnant maid servant lay floating in the well where her rich lover had thrown her at dead of night."[21]

Anand's famous trilogy after **Two Leaves and a Bud, The Village, Across the Black Waters** and **The Sword and the Sickle** was also a strong protest against social injustices. The story follows the life of Lal Sing from adolescent rebellion through his experiences in World War

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I to his return home and his revolutionary activities. While his earlier novels show a sense of horror and disgust against social and economic ills, the novels of the middle period show a greater concern for the human heart. The later novels, however, retain the passion for social justice as well as exhibit greater emotional depth. The naturalistic method employed in the earlier novels gave place to a later more varied mode of presentation, in which myth and archetype, metaphor and symbols, irony and satire play important parts. However, all the novels of Anand are basically unified by the philosophy of humanism that lends his major works a thread of continuity.

For Anand, Humanism is affirmation of Man, man not as an ideal construct, an abstraction, but as the sum of his world. It is a humane approach to the human condition that forms the nucleus of Anand's artistic vision and achievements. The profound sense of humanism in Anand makes him battle the pronounced enemies of humanism - inequality and injustice, racial or economic. All his novels depict Anand's humane sympathy for the oppressed and his earnest human concern for the underdog invests all his novels with a unique power. Tenderness is the essence of Anand's humanism. In his own words—"I hope I can teach even a few people of my generation that tenderness is our only asset."[22]

To Anand all his novels are, "whirlpools where (I) have been able to see individuals in the chaos."[23] His protest novels are "the source of renewal of human person,"[24] because Anand too believes perhaps, that glory lies not in cessation but in constant struggle. Commenting on the humanist novel, Anand says—"The novels about human beings need the author, and others, men, women and children in the whirlpool, where there are contrary impulses, clashing trends, doubts, misgivings, making life a river which flows...towards the ocean...If the novelist liberates his characters, and they take charge of their own destinies, fiction may release their inner sentiments...and

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reveal their predicaments, which...may lift the burden of pain and anxiety"[25]

Thus Anand's novels tend to present the alienated man–man alienated from an absurd world, the individual estranged from the society, the individuals isolation and subjectivity and his consequent feelings of anxiety, anguish and his assertion of personal freedom.

Just as Mulk Raj Anand's fiction is steeped in humanism, Greene's fiction reflects a similar art - humanistic in content and universal in form and a similar fiction which communicates their own life experience which is also the life experience of the struggling suffering humanity. Like Graham Greene's novels, Anand's novel's fictions too, are memorable defenses of men against machines of military life, tyranny and despair. Greene's novels present a whole series of characters who are lonely, alienated and anxious suffering from what Arnold called, the strange disease of modern life" —alienation. Whether it is Oliver Chant in **The Name of Action**, Scobie in **The Heart of the Matter** or Droker and Kay in **It's a Battlefield**—all represent the varied aspects of alienation. Anand's protagonists, too example Bakha in **Untouchable**, suffers from alienation as a result of social ostracism - the conflict between the society and individual forces him to experience a type of self-exile'.

Concepts of man and alienation in Anand draw comparisons with Marx too. Anand like Marx was also concerned with human alienation - Man had been dehumanized due to poverty which had crushed his individuality and reduced him to nonentity. The working classes and the poor are alienated and Anand, wanted to elevate the downtrodden and help them overcome their alienation. Anand's fiction incorporates the Gandhian humanism too, who wanted to transform the state of self alienation' into a state of 'self realisation'. Marx, Gandhi and Anand were all fighters - they wanted to eradicate the oppression of the existing social order which had reduced

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man to insignificance. What Walter Allen said of Greene, - that Greene "depicts a world of broken trust"[26] is quite true of Mulk Raj Anand too. Anand, like Greene is anxious to find a way. The lines from Bishop **Blougram's Apology**, that Greene had himself suggested as an epigraph of all his novels contains the quintessence of Mulk Raj Anand's fiction:

> Our interests on the dangerous edge of things,
>
> The honest thief, the tender murderer
>
> ....
>
> We watch while these in equilibrium keep
>
> The giddy line midway.

Thus, Mulk Raj Anand's fiction evinces keen interest in the tradition of social evils and his novels are artistic attempts to arouse the slumbering conscience of the people.

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9

Quest for Disentanglement with Reference to Mulk Raj Anand's *Untouchable* and *Coolie*

— *T. S. Ramesh*

Caste system in India is one kind of stratification based on inequality among human beings in matters of social interaction. Caste system and its manifold divisions are peculiar to Hindu society. The necessity of caste as Hindu is important to the ideas of *karma*, *dharma* and *moksa* are closely associated with the caste system. Nicholson opines:

> The Hindu social system is based on the interpretation of 'Karma' and 'Dharma'. According to Prof. Max Weber, 'Dharma' means duty within the bounds of 'Karma' into which a person is born. Both 'Dharma' and 'Karma' are flexible, for according to the Hindu belief, neither eternal reward nor punishment exists. Life is a cycle. Therefore, the fulfillment of the 'Dharma' within the 'Karma' can lead to rebirth into a higher 'Karma' and caste; Vice-Versa is also possible. It is the attainment of harmony between 'Dharma' and 'Karma', which is ideal of the Hindu way of life.

—Nicholson (Page No. 36)

It is considered, if man does sinful acts, he will be reborn in low caste or even as animal. Dharma is thus

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identified with the duties of one's caste; and birth in a particular caste becomes an index of the soul's progress towards liberation. The social order was also believed to be divinely created. The rules of the social and moral order were subsumed under the ethic-religious concept of dharma. For Hindus, caste is an effective instrument of social control. Since caste is determined by birth, an individual's socialization is largely influenced by caste values. Many traditional occupations are usually connected with one or the other caste. Each caste has its own way of life, and from childhood onwards people accept diversity as a basis for relationship.

But, there is a common understanding that untouchability is a stigma attached to some people. It is rooted in the social and religious life of India for over 3000 years. Their position is that they have a number of duties and hardly any rights for themselves. Today casteism has permeated political life to such an extent nobody appears to take note of this deadly cancer.

Mulkraj Anand, a reformist, is against caste system in India. He feels that casteism which is an off-shoot of Karma, breeds cruelty and inferiority, Karma is a pernicious belief prevailing among the masses propagated by the high caste Hindus. It means that all men suffer in their present existence because of their bad deeds in their previous birth. The doctrine of Karma is a foolish and cruel device. It is invented by Manu to subject the low-caste to humiliation and suffering without any fear of revolt. This concept of Karma gives a sense of fatality to their suffering. So, in order to avoid sufferings, Anand places man at the centre of all things. He believes equality of all men. He doesn't see any distinction among man in the form of caste, creed or race, which are obstacles for human being's growth.

The novel **Untouchable** centres on Bhaka, an outcast, a sweeper by profession. He does not hate the cleaning of latrines. His work gives him physical dignity. He is strong and well-built. He proves himself to be a Hindu reformer

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who could not tolerate the inhuman attitudes in the name of God. He is shackled by the age-old customs and traditions.

Anand's hero, the downtrodden, does not suffer from tragic flaw. He is a victim of the society and his fate is determined by heredity. In trying to attain his freedom from the social inequalities, the hero seeks his own identity, which begins with the recognition of his position in the social order and a consequent sense of isolation. In this novel, it is the 'touch–scene' which suddenly makes Bakha know his real position in social order. It is a moment of 'self-revelation' for him. "For them I am a Sweeper, Sweeper-Untouchable! Untouchable! Untouchable! That's the word! Untouchable!. I am an Untouchable!" (59). This self-realization instigates him a search for freedom.

Bhaka seeks his freedom in a feudal society which has unquestionable faith in caste discrimination, hypocrisy, cruelty, deceit and inhumanity. We see him stand passive and bewildered at the immensity of the horror, hoping for a change. He returns to his bed at night with more hope that he had set out with in the morning. But his hopes are not fulfilled even after sixty years of independence. Though, constitution of India has made it a crime to practice untouchability, "there are untouchable to be found in every corner of India even today. It is clear from the answer given by Anand to Coweajee, when Coweajee asked Anand why he could not sell the new edition of untouchable in India, he replied: "impossible. India believes that it has long ago solved the question of untouchability by passing an Act all against it in parliament". The irony of this is Coweajee says, that even today there are million of untouchable in India. In Untouchable, Anand does not believe in God, Hell or Heaven.

He dismisses this concept as trite as it is no longer fit for the awakening masses. The worldly existence alone matters. Hence, there is no scope for 'Karma'. Bhakha suffers not because of his misdeeds but because he is treated as an Untouchable.

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In *Untouchable* Mulk Raj Anand gives his message of humanism, socialism, brotherhood, economic freedom and equality. His 'Humanism' in this novel, has made him look like an optimist, his realism has also been relieved of its harshness by the deep colours of humanism that is central to untouchable. The concluding portion of the novel gives three solutions. That is conversion to Christianity, abolition of untouchability and the introduction of the flush system.

The first solution is the conversion to Christianity. Jesus Christ makes no distinction between the poor and the rich, between the high-castes Hindu or the low caste untouchable. After a chain reaction originating from the pollution episode, Bakha goes away from the din and noise of the city. There he meets colonel Hutchinson, a Salvationist missionary who realises his plight and tries to persuade him to embrace Christianity, so that he can escape from the injustice of untouchability and caste taboos. For Hutchinson the gospels of Jesus Christ are the right answer to the problem of untouchability.

The second solution is that of Mahatma Gandhi. He appears as a character who speaks on the evils of untouchability. For him untouchability is the greatest blot on Hinduism. He further says that, "all public wells, temples, roads, schools must be declared open to the untouchables" (164).

Then comes the harangue put in the mouth of a young poet, the editor of Nawajug, Iqbal Nath Sarashar. He criticizes Gandhi's approach and suggests the introduction of the flush system as the only solution to the problem of untouchability. The introduction of the flush system is a concrete solution. E.M. Forster rightly says, "No God is needed to rescue the untouchables, no rows of self-sacrifice and abnegation on the part of more fortunate Indians, but simply and solely—the flush system. Introduce water closets and main drainage throughout India and all this wicked rubbish about untouchability will disappear". "Preface" to Untouchable (8). As a novelist, Anand speaks

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through his character. His reform zeal compels him to suggest the ways and means to build a society, which should be casteless.

In *Coolie*, also, Anand rejects the concept of Karma. Munoo has a traditional sense of inferiority. He receives everything patiently without protest. He is content to be a slave and a good servant. He tries to adjust himself with everyone but he fails in every step. The failure is not because of any inherent flaw in him but because of the cruelty of circumstances, the greedy selfishness and mercilessness of his fellow human beings. Society treats him as an animal. The ill-treatment helps him to become a vagabond. Anand suggests that a little more sympathy and a little more tenderness on the part of the society could have turned Munoo into a happy individual.

Munoo passes through five centres in his quest for happiness and freedom only to get into the trap of death. He returns from place to place in search of happiness and freedom. But everywhere he is exploited or put to suffering. First his greedy aunt sends him to the house of the bank Sub-Accountant Nathoo Ram, as a servant, but there he is ill-treated, abused and kicked. Secondly, in the Cat Killer's Lane Daulatpur, selfish cruel Ganpat mars his happiness. Sir George White Cotton Mills in Bombay, Munoo is thwarted by the foreman Jimmie. In Malabar Hill, he is knocked down into unconscious by Mrs. Mainwaring. At Simla, he is employed as a rickshaw puller. Wherever he goes, he is ceaselessly tried by destiny. 'Munoo dies of consumption, mentally and physically spent and broken' after working as rickshaw puller in Simla. In this novel, Anand shows that suffering and pain are inevitable features of human existence. Munoo's life is a Saga of suffering and dies a tragic death at the age of sixteen. Munoo suffers not because of fate but because of circumstances. He is victim to social forces.

Humanism as a philosophy runs as a red thread throughout *Coolie*. Compassion for the poor is the major

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strain in Anand's treatment of his themes. This is his message to the suffering humanity. Munoo's tragedy is universalised and the human element in man of low class is brought out by showing their essential dignity and innocence. *Coolie* is a novel of social protest. Anand has portrayed Munoo's suffering and exploitation through his anger. It is a direct expression of his love of man, a basic tenet of his humanism.

Thus, Anand who remains an avowed enemy of caste, through these two novels, brings out the portrait of the miserable lot of the unfortunate untouchables. He suggests that they can be freed from the shackles of destructive orthodoxy and tradition.

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10

Jim Corbett : From Man Eaters to Mankind

— *Dr. S. S. Bhandari*

Jim Corbett will be remembered not only as an accomplished hunter and the genius of the jungle lores but more than that he will belong to the ages for his intrinsic manifestation of a Samaritan spirit which he willingly put at the disposal of 'sturdy, happy and unspoiled people of hill'. (Man Eaters of Kumaaon, p.30). Both through his thoughts as well as deeds he assimilated himself into the eternal verities of regional life and depicted them so marvellously that a few regionalists can commensurate with his skill in the art of real story narration: the engaging jungle stories in the nucleus of which resides man. His numerous hunting expeditions so thrilling and awe-inspiring are recorded in real earnest and do reveal the mind and personality of a man whose quest has never been of a mere trophy winning sportsman but of a person dedicated to the cause of *'India's starving million, among whom, he says,*

> 'I have lived and whom I love that I shall endeavour to tell in the pages of this book, which I humbly dedicate to my friends, the poor of India' (My India : l)

In the Thak Man eater' chapter of his famous book, 'Man Eaters of Kumaon,' he says quite candidly: "*I promised (to go to Kot Kindri, I must confess that it was more in the*

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interest of the local inhabitants than in the interest of the contractors, I gave my promise." (Man Eaters of Kumaon : 175). Born and fostered in the salubrious climate of Kumaon region, Jim Corbett had absorbad all those sterling qualities which went a long way to make him a phenomenal man both in mind and spirit. His proximity to nature ever since his childhood had instilled into him a deep inquisitiveness for the rhythm throbbing through the fauna world; their instinctive behaviour exposition, witnessed by him several times in jungle, led him to the writing of his famous book 'Jungle lore'. In true sense of the term he justifies the Wordsworthian theory, 'nature never did betray the heart that loved her.' Corbett's impeccable study and practice of jungle lore, of which he gave a comprehensive analysis in this book served, as his dependable **'Guardian Angel'** through the thick and thin of jungle life, even when his own life was at a stake. The whole gamut of bird and animal physiology vibrating through the vast and inaccessible expanse of forest was of especial curiosity to him. The marvels and mysteries of animal kingdom concealing many meaningful instincts were unraveled by him through a systematic investigation: all laid against the backdrop of elemental nature. Endowed with the rare gifts of penetrating sight and exceptional understanding of jungle life, Corbett struck upon the theory of ecological balance which not only controls the activities of few birds and animals but of the whole organism. This feeling once stirred made Corbett a strong champion, barring his killing of a few intrepid man eaters, of wild life preservation, an anxiety causing alarm all over the world now a days. On being insisted to shoot a pig passing close by he retorted to a local inhabitant.

> 'I have not brought rifle to Garhwal to shoot pigs that are running for their lives but to shoot what you think is an evil sprit, and what I know is a leopard'. (Mail Eating Leopard of Rudraprayag page: 139)

The curse of poverty and illiteracy had crippled the logical vision of their thinking. Corbett through his real

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stories has truly exposed superstitions prevalent in their life during the pre-independence period of India. Some ascribed it to the malediction of deities or local Gods on the families of tlie victims, others called it as the result of the sin of religious and moral turpitude committed by the people in that particular affected area. By visiting the scenes of incidents and discoursing with people one could find all the regional elements of Corbetts stories resuscitated and brought to life with renewed interest. More than his ardent perseverance for hunting which was, for the most part, avowedly directed against the Man-Eaters of Kumaon and Garhwal, Corbett's core interest did lay in the study of human life that inhabited this region during the British regime. Those momentous days spent among the hill-folk are recorded so comprehensively that any pruning or improvement upon the structure of tales engineered by him would be an open violation of the rule of veracity implied in the jungle tales. Many armchair regionalists, after him, have merely fell the distant air of the region, but Corbett, in down to earth reality, has breathed in the air of the legion, watched its daily activities from fields to forests and from harvest to hearths; the flesh and blood being in the centre of all these narratives teeming with genuine sentiments of the region. Corbett did understand those nuances of regional dialects which were soaked deep in the century old sentiments and feeling of the people. As it is rightly said by David Abercrombie: *"Language mediates between man and his environment"*. (Problem & principles of languages studies 1976, p. 11). Corbett himself verifies this truth, *'A life long association with the hill folk enables me to understand the different dialects that are spoken in Kumaon and what is just as important to follow their every thought'*. (The Temple Tiger and—More Man-Eaters of Kumaon, p. 131). In his book 'My India' he has substantiated those rare evocations of sentiments which are redolent of the soil of the region. He has chosen the real incidents and situations from common life and most graphically described them in a selection of language really

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used by people of the region. His English evinces a great adaptability to both thoughts and dialects of the regional inhabitants. Here Corbett corroborates the 'Poetic diction' of English romantic poet Wordsworth,

> "The essential passions of the heart find a better soil in which they can attain their maturity, are less under restrains and speak a plainer and more emphatic language because in that condition of life our elementary feelings co-exist in a state of greater simplicity...and more forcibly communicated". (English Critical Essays page no. 3).

The vivid and genuine charm of this synergy of sentiments with language becomes evident when Corbett in his book 'My India' dissuades Kunwar Singh from taking opium. Lying almost on his death bed and badly enervated by his addiction to narcotic drug i.e. opium, Kunwar Singh received such mild chastisement in a language as perforce evokes the elementary feelings of the native;

> "Times have changed uncle, and you with them. There was a day when no man would have dared to remove you from your own house and lay you on the ground of a servant's hut to die like an outcaste and beggar... Had I delayed but a few minutes in answering your.summons this day. You know you would have been on your way to burning ghat". (My India p. 27)

It is such a spontaneous flow of language that can be translated in Kumaoni dialect, and to evoke a feeling for stern oath the sanctity of which becomes more binding on a person than the statutory warning, Kunwar Singh is administered an oath of such sort: With a sacred thread round your fingers and a pipal leaf in your hands. You must swear an oath on your eldest son's head that never again will you touch the foul drug. And this time you will, and you shall keep your oath". (Ibid)' The pathetic bemoaning of a widow in 'The Man-Eating Leopard of Rudrapraygʼ is

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rendered in a selective language when her only son is killed by the leopard: "What crime Parmeshwar has my son, who was loved by all, committed that on the threshold of life he has deserved death in a terrible way" (The Man-Eating Leopard of Rudraprayng p. 139) Corbett has most appropriately conveyed these singular regional sentiments conceived on such occasions of crisis. Numerous example of such sorts showing kaleidoscopic shades of language for different moods can be gleaned from his books as would require separate treatment in the study of situation oriented language.

The early part of the 20th Century, both in hills and foot-hills, was a phase marked by different social, economic and religious mores and moorings from that which in seen in the modern times. A big change after the independence has withered much of the intrinsic colour of the old society but what Corbett has recorded won't be trampled or effaced by the foot-prints of time and space. Despite all the odds against the regional men like meager production, limited means and poor conditions of living, Corbett found these sons of soil cheerfully stuck to their nostalgic mooring. The case of the man in 'Temple Tiger and More Man-Eaters of Kumaon' is obvious, when I asked him why he did not leave this isolated place and try to make a living elsewhere, he said simply ' this is my home'

Right from the malaria infected foot hills up to the upper reaches of the Himalayas Corbett had traversed the region with passionate interest, awe and personal involvement in it. He knew in real earnestness what it was like to live in the impecunious conditions and to adjust with poor means at hand, and pass the wearisome days of life amid the stranglehold and orthodoxies of both Kumaon and Garhwal region. All his monumental books on the region: 'The Man-Eaters of Kumaon,' 'The Temple Tiger and More Man Eaters of Kumaon, 'My India,' Jungle Lore' etc. do contain in them the epitome of contemporary regional life. Subjecting this tale of life neither to dimutive measures nor

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to exaggerative magnitude he portrayed the simple life of hill folk in varicolored details. Many times, on the spur of a subjective moments of his approach to these elements, Corbett assimilated himself in the regional scheme of this life, rather than remaining a mere observer of it.

Along with its unique physiography, this region, then a part of the united provinces (Agra and Avadh), drew the attention of Corbett not only to its awful man-eaters and other games of the forest but also towards its social and cultural signification. With his penetrating sight into the deep recesses of social strata he could read between the line the cognizable factors strengthening the physical and cultural contiguity of the legion. In between these elements he dealt with the bizarre questions;

> 'That would earn one a thick ear all the world over but in this reason these are answered so artlessly and universally, for example whether married and if so the number and sex of children and their ages, if not married, why not, occupation and amount of pay, so on. (Man-Eaters of Kumaon p. 103)

In a state marked by not any turmoil or turbulence their life even peeping through the pores of their poverty looked chaste and unassuming. Even the terrible lavages caused by the man eaters kept them satisfied with the lot, 'what is fated can not be abated', Corbett verities the fact:

> 'Their boundless faith in their philosophy, a faith strong enough to remove mountains, and very soothing to depressed feeling, that no human beings and no animals can die before their appointed time, and that the man-eaters time had not yet come, called for no explanation, and admitted of no argument.' (Man-Eating leopard of Rudraprayag p. 171)

Whether it was the reluctance of twenty strong people of Champawat to save the life of a woman who, just at their

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arms, length, in the open day light, was being, carried away by the tigress and when the same set of people were questioned for their denial of succour to the victim, the author received the curt reply, 'No sahib, we did nothing, for we were afraid, or it would have availed nothing,for she was covered with blood and would of a surety died of her wounds,' (Man Eaters of Kumaon p. 13) or was it not the fool-hardy feats of Panwa of Panargarh? Who, after saving tousle-headed dwarf (their guide on their way to the killing of Man-Eater of Panargarh) from the rushing currents of the turbid river, says blandly, 'Oh it was not his life that I wanted to save! But my new coat that was strapped to his back'. (The Temple Tiger p. 77), Or a sound but heartless logic of the man at Golabrai in Rudraprayag, unable to rescue his wife from the clutches of leopard, when he says, 'of what use would it have been for me to risk my life in trying to recover a dead body?, (Man Eating Leopard of Rudraprayag p. 44). Coibett did put up with all these daily chores and banalities of the hill- folk. Contrasted with such eccentricities viewed in the Kaleidoscope of regional life this savant of jungle lores and mankind perceived within the naive exterior of these people the other amiable qualities of head and heart. He could recount word by word the fierce encounter of tall gaunt man of Chowgarh (Champawat) with the man-eating tigress in the tone and nuances of this man's own dialect. He is also full of encomium for that brave amazon living on the right bank of Alaknanda, who registered an unyielding resistance against the man-eating leopard with her gandesa (a tool for chopping chaff for cattle). And the rare fortitude of the old man of Kanda, wandering throughout the night in dense jungle all alone, making desperate search for the dead body of his only son killed by the man-eater just a few hours ago, is case that makes readers thoughtful. When the man-eater is killed, the same stoic old man says in his quite and collected voice, 'I am content now Sahib, for you have avenged my son. (The Man-Eaters of Kumaon p. 168) One example of this naïve simplicity teemed with a rich sense of humour in it sparkles

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through the story of 'Talla Des Man-Eater! The animated conveisation held among the inhabitants of that place takes a spontaneous turn to ascertain the period ever since the man-eaters had started killing people in 'Talla Des:

> "The village had suffered for many years from the man-eater, some said eight years and others said ten, but all were agreed that the man-eater had made its appearance the year that Bache Singh had cut off his toes, while splitting wood with an axe, and Dan Singh's black bullock, for which he had paid thirty rupees, had fallen down the hill and got killed.' (The Temple Tiger p. 177)

An analogous case of an inhabitant far off Nepal corresponds to this episode when the son was born to his wife, he went to his Pandit and asked him to draw the horoscope of the infant. Asked by the Pandit to tell the time of his son's birth he said unwaveringly, 'when my buffalo excreted my son was born'. Such numerous comic episodes scattered all though his pages enliven the joy of life which he savored and availed himself, through his purposeful wandering of the region.

His famous book, *'My India'* is dedicated to the poor people of India. Wherever he went he spread out his adhesive web of friendship and in return got stuck into it the confidence and good wishes of people. It is the proof of his commiseration for the poor and downtrodden that scores of characters like Bala Singh, Chamari, Kunwar Singh, Mothi, Queen of the village and several others figure out in his book not in the form of fiction but in flesh and blood reality of life. His real stories of Mokameh Ghat, Bihar in the book 'My India' are interspersed with many characters of downtrodden class. Corbett draws not only the graphic pictures of these dusty and matted people but more than it he gives a true account of their genuine qualities of head and heart that shine though their rough exterior. He himself verifies it through a village veterinary doctor who

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did mend the broken leg of the tamed antelope of the author;

> 'It is unwise in India to judge from appearance. The "bone-setter was a feeble old man exhibiting in his person and tattered dress every sign of poverty but he was nonetheless a specialist, and a man of few words' (My India 136:1983).

He acknowledges his eager attachment for the people of specially two regions,' The scenes of my sketches centre round these two points in India, Nainital and Mokameh Ghat...Mokameh Ghat where 1 laboured for twenty-one years *(My India 1983:2)* Most of these stories are entitled with the real names of the persons belonging to the 'Dalit' class. The characters like Budhu, Chamari, Ram Saran, Parbatti, Lalaji and Izat may have their respective individual traits but all of them in one way or the other represent a society that had undergone the pangs of poverty in the Pre-independence period of India. The opening of the story **'Budhu'** is narrated thus:

> 'Budhu was a man of Depressed class and during all the year I knew him I never saw him smile: his life had been too hard and the iron had entered deep into his very soul'. (My India 1983: 155)

This sombre grimness was not without reason. It was handed down to him in the course of three generations. His grandfather borrowed two rupees from a village **'Bania'**, who through a crux of usury multiplied the amount to rupees one hundred fifteen in the third generation of **Budhu**: a usual act of extortion perpetrated on these poor lots by a callous class of 'Haves'. It made him an erstwhile **'Bandhuwa Mazdoor'**. Despite the services he rendered to 'Bania' in harvesting season, for the payment of interest, he could not liquidate the cumbrous family debt. Had Corbett not shown Commiseration for Budhu by freeing him from the coercive clutches of brazenfaced Bania, he (Budhu) and his future generation would have been condemned to

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eternal condemnation. Corbett truly verifies the tale of innumerable unfortunate oppressed people through this story:

> Only one of millions freed of a debt that had oppressed the three generations but had the number been legion my pleasure could not have been greater, nor could any words have affected me more deeply than Budhu's mute gesture and the tears that blinded him as he stumbled away to tell his wife that the Bania's debt had been paid and that they were free. *(My India: 157)*

The prima facie impression of the character of '*Chamari*' is, as his name implies, that of a person who belonged to the lowest strata of India's sixty million untouchables, but this character, as he reveals his qualities in the course of the story, attains his glory on his own rather than the story writer attributes these qualities to him. It is through his altruistic merit 'Chamari' falsifies the conservative system of caste and creed and emerges alone as a paragon of virtue, to which obeisance is made by a priest of the great Vishnu temple at Kashi. More than this 'Chamari', by dint of his noble virtues, elicited this adulation from the pen of the author;

> 'Chamari was a heathen according to our Christian belief, and the lowest of India's Untouchables, but if I am privileged to go where he has gone, I shall be content'. (My India 1983: 173)

In the book 'My India' Corbett has extolled the large segment of Indian society called 'Depressed' or 'Dalits'. He acted as a wary witness of their daily toils and sufferings. Most of the characters shown in this book do not stiller from the scourge of Man-eaters as he has described in other hunting tale books but none the less their calamities are not less poignant than that of other people. Their life of poverty, illness and ignorance is a curse for them, but more painful than this is their perpetual exploitation by the

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privileged section of society. But these odds against their life did not preclude them from their usual cheerfulness which they managed to extract out of the lean hours in their life because;

> 'Hard working people are always cheerful, for they have no time to manufacture imaginary troubles, which are always worse than real ones. (My India 1983:169) Corbett again upholds this mirthfulness of people thus, 'My people were admittedly poor, and they had their full share of trouble, none the less they were full of good cheer and as I could understand and speak their language as well as they could, I was able to take part in their lighthearted banter and appreciate all their jokes. (My India:167)

Geographically different but the same set of milieu presents itself to Corbett in the far of region of Kumaon. In the book '*Temple Tiger and more Man Eaters of Kumaon*, he requires the hospitality of the villagers of Tamili in these words'

> 'I often wonder, whether in any part of the world a stranger, whose business was not known arriving unexpectedly at a remote village, would-be aspired of the same welcome and hospitality as he would receive at any place throughout the length and breadth of Kumaon!. (Temple Tiger and more Man Eaters of Kumaon p. 131).

Those specious times of hospitality, jaggery mixed bowlful milk served to the guests, have now become the things of antiquity. Such amicable gesture, the cultural heritage of Kumaon, is highly extolled by Corbett. The glory of that cultural heritage is diminishing piecemeal in the present day civilization. But the books of Corbett are the veritable repositories of such noble attributes as the people of his tales not only possessed but also shared with others. They earned the prize of good name that in real sense is bestowed on mankind not through power, pelf and shrewd

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devices of politics, but through unsullied innocence and integrity.

Though bogged down in the age-long conventions of their region, the noiseless tenor of their life went on without any rational thinking even when faced with the calamities and killing of human beings by the man-eaters. The merciless killings of human beings by the man-eaters were deemed to be the result of malediction inflicted on the natives of certain places. Ignoring the existing reality and innovating self-satisfying canards have been the hall-marks of the society in which Corbett spent 70 years of his life;

> 'In Garhwal all kills by man-eaters are attributed to sadhus and in Nainital and Almora districts, all such kills are attributed to Boksars who dwell in the unhealthy belt of grass at the foot of the hills called Tarai, living chiefly for game'. (The Man-Eating Leopard of Rudraprayag p. 22)

Besides indicating all these superstitions prevalent in the region Corbett made himself an inseparable part of this *loci* and became in all earnestness party to such beliefs. He was not without faith reposed by mankind in the existence of a saviour serving as an amulet against all the evils during critical phase of life. He too branded it as his 'Guardian Angel' that saved his life in the hours of peril. The sudden appearance of three votive lamps on the other end of the holy shrine Purnagiri during his expedition of[8] Talla Des Man-eater' corroborates his unflinching belief in the supernatural phenomena. This mysterious scene witnessed in full consciousness by Corbett and his men corresponded to his subsequent killing of three man-eaters of Talla Des'. Furthermore, his selection of propitious day for journey again confirms his belief in the customs and belief of the region which ultimately made him an inalienable part of it.

Corbett, with a few parallels in regional literature, is the true chronicler of the age, the colour of which has now almost become evanescent in the modern glare of

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materialistic acquisitiveness. His vicarious deeds, at the other ends, were equally greeted by India's starving million, among whom, he has lived and loved them with all the varities of that time.

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11

Gujarati Dalit Poetry

— Dr. Pathik Paramar
Translated by Dr. M.B. Gaijan

In Gujarati literature, the beginning of Dalit literature is not an accidental event. The Messiah of the Dalits, *Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar* passed away in 1956, consequently the various magazines in Indian languages published the poems to tribute him. The stories of venerable *Dr.Ambedkar's* life and his literature, the Dalit literary creators had started to sing. *Dr. Ambedkar* has suggested,

> "I earnestly appeal to the literary creators, you prosper the values, the values of life and cultural through your literary creation. Your thoughts should not be limited or shallow but make them liberal and vast (universal). Make free your voice from the four walls. Do not keep the enlightenment done by your pen limited to your home alone, spread that light everywhere to drive away the darkness of every village. You should not forget that there is another world of the neglected, Dalits and helpless human beings within our nation. Try to understand their misery and anxiety and dedicate your creative power to make their life respectable to other beings. Genuine humanity lies there."

'Literature should be created in such a tongue so even smaller man like farm-labourer can understand' – *Gandhiji's* that suggestion was accepted by the writers of the Gandhian

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era similarly to complete the uncompleted works of Dr. Ambedkar enlightened Dalits became active. Basically Dr. Ambedkar was from Maharastra so Ambedkarite poems first born in Marathi language. These poems are known as the "*Dalit Poetry*". The Dalit poems emerged in the 6th decade became more effective and powerful in the 7th decade. Gradually the Marathi Dalit literature becomes stronger. This literary trend became fixed and stronger and it broke the barriers of the languages and spread in other Indian languages. Thus inspired by the Marathi language-literature and descended in Gujarati literature, the Dalit literary trend is today a part of the national literary trend. In contemporary time this literary trend is fully flowering in regional languages of India. Dalit literary trend is little different from the '*Black Literature*' popular in English language. The cause of the difference is lying in the issues like '*Varnavyavastha*' and '*Untouchability*, and cultural diversity. The root of Indian Dalit literature is lying in *Dr. Ambedkar's* vision of modern India. As *Shri P.L. Deshpande* says; "This is the fruit of *Phuley, Agarkar* and *Ambedkar's* dedicated efforts. They contributed in the life-threatening situation with the presence of light of their knowledge." *Daya Pawar* writes; "Dalit writers' movement is not limited to the socio-economic conflict but it is against the well-established .cultural orthodoxy."

In Gujarati literature the Dalit literary trend has started around 1975. This literary trend fully flowered after 1980. Various events and causes took place at that time like Anti-Reservation and Anti-Roster Strikes, Communal Riots, embracing other religion, Dalit killings of *Ranamalpur* and *Golana* are responsible for that. In the 8th decade, in the mainstream Gujarati literature, the poetry gradually became like a 'Chorus' and gradually became dry and mechanical, a few writers were busy to dignify the Gujarati poetry, at that time the conscious literary creators of the Dalit society have started to create, as a part of the Ambedkarite movement the Dalit poems of social sensibility. That proved very significant event. These poems give the new freshness to

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the Gujarati literature. The poems which were going away from the life, now started throbbing with human life. "We are far away from the statement that literature is the reflection of life" — The statement of *Suresh Joshi* (Gujarati leading poet and critic) proves here meaningless.

In spite of that the mainstream Gujarati critics have not noticed the novelty presented by the Dalit writers. Gujarati literary critical tradition was like a bullock in traditional oil-mill (It walks round and round but on the same place), it chewed the glory of the poems of the 7th and 8th decades. A few literary works produced by the Dalit writers that could shake the critics from head to toe but the mainstream critics because of nausea and unwillingness towards Dalits had not uttered a sing word to appreciate, and moreover they created confusion on the term of 'Dalit'. The confusion of the interpretation of the term lasted long. A few Dalit-hater critics who failed to understand and enjoy the Dalit literature they present the ridiculous argument, and try to give the synonymous if the term, a few became the victims of mockery because of their ignorance about the literary trend of the neighbouring state. A few argued that this sort of literature was also produced during the Gandhian era. Novelty in this literature is not caught by their eyes. They do not find anything wrong in *Jain-Jainatara Sahitya, Charani Sahitya, Parasi Sahitya, Kabirpanthi Sahitya, the Sahitya of Swaminaravan Sampradaya* — etc but they became nauseous on the term of 'Dalit literature'. They donot know the term 'Dalit' and the 'Dalit literature' is well established in neighbouring state Maharastra before emerging in the Gujarati literature. And this literary trend descended in Gujarat with the 'Dalit' term and as a part of the national literary trend. That is why their harsh and hollow shout proves meaningless. Now, when the term 'Dalit' and the 'Dalit literature' have set the unique identity then they can visualize that, but because of the controversy of the term benefit goes to the Gujarati Dalit literature. This controversy gave new energy to the Gujarati Dalit writers

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they became active with the double force with the slogan '*Jor Lagake Haiso*' (Collectively do with the double force) and they have struggled consciously. Mainly at the initial stage of Gujarati Dalit literature, the criticism of the literature was only done by the Dalit writers themselves. *Harish Mangalam, Dalapat Chauhan, Joseph Macwan, Raju Solanki* and others are the pioneers who always remain active at the beginning. And in addition of this *Raghuveer Chaudhari* the leading Gujarati critic, though late, but neutrally evaluated the literature. The critics like *Raghuveer Chaudhari* gave indirectly new force to the Dalit writers and awaken the Dalit writers' literary consciousness with eagerness. That's why the Dalit literature has come out from the limitations of its initial stage.

Like Marathi Dalit literature, the Gujarati Dalit literature has also come out with the poems. And after that, by the strong hands this sort of literature prosper in various literary forms, in spite of that it fully flowers in poetry. The literature produced in both, prose and poems has no limited values and when the Dalit literary trend became popular at national and international level, the Gujarati Dalit literature prospering since last two and half decades requires unavoidably the proper literary evaluation of it. A few literary evaluations of the Dalit literature are done by only the Dalit teachers (University and college teachers) but even that work is not completely published. Even after the Golden Jubilee of Indian Independence, the Dalits' social, financial, educational and cultural progress is not properly done, many hurdles are there in the path of their progress like Untouchability, exploitation and atrocities etc. Because of political and social movement of Dr. *Babasaheb Ambedkar* like the Man of the Age - *Yuga Purush* -, after the independence, the Dalits got safeguards like the reservation, as a result of that gradually the educated Dalits became conscious to live with their Self-respect and dignity, their self-sufferings they expressed with anger as the Dalit poems.

Mohan Paramar has appropriately written in his article titled "*Gujarati Dalit literature of the 20th Century*";

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> "The literature produced before 1975 based on the Dalits' life that was created under the influence of Gandhian thoughts. In the code of conduct of Gandhiji, Untouchability and its removal was one issue. The novelists who raised the issue in their works, it was the part of social evils. These all the writers were not dedicated authors in genuine sense. The identity of *Dalit Samaj,* Dalits' awakened consciousness against the social evils, defense of the sources which set the identity of the Dalits etc. these are the essential aspects of the Dalit literature. The Dalit writers earnestly decide and dedicate to awaken the Dalit consciousness through the above mentioned aspects. This sort of dedicated Dalit literature has come out about 1975."

The literature produced before 1975 was the literature of Dalit sympathizers, and the Dalit literature came out after 1975 that is quite different from the earlier one. This literature is the collective and conscious 'team work' of the Dalit writers. In the preface of '*Asmita*' *Joseph Macwan* writes;

> "The poet of the Dalit poems is conscious of his own pains-sufferings. The borrowed things he can not digest, he has to split the firmly fixed web of the orthodoxy. That's why whatever is in the hand is the best weapon that is his policy, his art is that where he can use his hand. His miseries are immeasurable even the length of the epic is short to narrate that and *Khanda Kavyo* (long narrative poem) based on his life's sufferings are numerous. To destroy the every orthodox tradition from the source is his inscription that's why this is not acceptable for the Dalit poetry and the poet to depart from the right path."

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Umashankar Joshi said;

> "The literature should be evaluated on the base that how far it is useful to the life and the progress of the society and another thing the elements against the life also create hurdle in the literary evaluation." Considering this what the Dalits writers shoulder the social responsibility should be welcomed. As *Yashawant Doshi* writes; "If anybody says it is '*Varanadwesh*'– prejudice against the Varna – yet that is the reaction of different type of '*Varanadwesh*'."

Harish Mangalam says;

> "The feeling of dedication to the society fully flows in the Dalit poetry. The Dalit poets have continuously done the job to split the web which is the hurdle in the social uplift. Racial theme – caste exploitation – in their poems is like a red colour in the blood. With the social reality, poet's self-connection is presented. So to understand and enjoy their poems the social reality of their community plus poets' financial, cultural and social situation must be known."

Jayant R. Joshi writes;

> "The Dalit literature hits on a few aspects which are since thousands years mixed as an integral part of our culture and tradition. Considering human being at the centre how a man has committed crime on the fellow human beings it presents that. The Dalit writer has the experience of what the crime was committed on the fellow beings that's why there is a unique ring in his expression."

Conclusion is that accepting a few characters and the events of the Dalit society, before 1975, Dalit sympathizer's literature was produced, Dalit literature is quite different from that. This literature is connected with '**Dalitism**' and

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'Ambedkarism'. The Dalit writers are dedicated for social awakening and ready to root out the social evils like Untouchability from its source. It is not easy to divert the voice of Dalits in the dark valley. These people remained suppressed and depressed since the centuries. To commit atrocities on them the landlords, moneylenders, officers and so called monopolized caste-protector of the upper castes, none left nothing. Now the soul of Dalit has awakened. Well equipped after getting education the Dalits have made war-cry of the protest. They have the authentic experiences of being exploited. They are eager and alert to remove the social injustice. Their path is full of obstacles but it is not acceptable for the writers to distract them for their goal. They use literature as the medium to tell the story of their misery and cruelty committed on them, they tell on the Dharma, Democracy, Gandhian thoughts, *Manu Manas* – thinking as directed by the *Manu Smriti* – etc. They tell it with satire and anger, they highlight the contemporary reality as they have visualized. In their expression their own sufferings emerge as the protest.

The Dalit literature in Gujarat, in connection with the Marathi Dalit literature, at the early stage the poets like *Dalapàt Chauhan, Pravin Gadhavi, Nirava Patel* etc. are basically connected. '*Panther", 'Akrosh* (The Anger)', '*Garud* (The Eagle)', '*Kalo Suraj* (The Black Sun)', '*Dalit Bandhu', 'Ajampo* (Unrest),' '*Mukty Nayak* (The Messiah),' '*Disha* (The Direction)', '*Naya Marga* (The New Path)', '*Dalit Mitra', 'Dalit Mukti', 'Samanata* (The Equality),' '*Abhyudaya* (Welfare of the Weak),' '*Pragati Jyota, 'Taras* (Thirst),' '*Akshaya* (Nonperishable),' '*Hayati* (The Existence) are connected with the Dalit writings. To spread and prosper the Dalit literature these periodicals play key-role.

It is true that at the initial stage of the Gujarati Dalit poetry there was the intense anger and revolutionary protest presented in an explosive way, poetic excellence was not clear and the preaching was clearly visible but very soon the Dalit poets have overcome the limitation.

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K. B. Pandya's anthology of Dalit poems captioned *'Chinagari* (The Spark)' is the first Gujarati Dalit poem collection. Before and after this anthology of the poems other poem-collections have also published they are *Ganapat Paramar* and *Manishi Jani* edited *'Dalit Kavita'* (The Dalit Poems) in 1981, *'Visfota* (The Explosion) ed. by *Chandu Maheriya* and *Balakrishna Anand* in 1982, *'Asmita'* (Identity) *Chandu Maheriya* edited in 1983, *Raju Solanki* edited *'Sankalan Geet'* (Collected Songs) in 1986, *Nilesh Kathad* edited *'Ekalavya no Angutho'* (The Thumb of Ekalavya) in 1987, *Vasant Purani* edited *'Manas'* (Human Being) in 1992, *Dalapat Chauhan, Harish Mangalam and Pravin Gadhavi* edited *'Dundumbhi'* (The Big Drum) in 2001. While doing the detailed study of the Gujarati Dalit poems published in the above cited collections it seems Gujarati Dalit poems gradually become profound and artistically well composed, fury and preaching gradually reduce. In the beginning of the 9th decade it will be enjoyed that the Dalit poems become free from its earlier drawback and become more artistic.

In all these poem-collections Dalits and non-Dalit poets' poems are included, here the Dalit poets' emotional expression and the lingual expression seem little different from the non-Dalit poets, there is the suppressed voice, since the centuries of the oppressed. The suppressed cry will be heard, the self-experiences of injustice and atrocities are strongly presented visible. Those who shout on the name of creativity of Dalit literature and its artistic values, to shut their mouths the excellent and unique Dalit literature is created by the Dalit writers, even in the mainstream of Gujarati literature this sort of literature is not produced up to today. At the end of the 20th century the non-Dalits became more active so right from the beginning of 21st century, it is visible, and this literary trend is moving towards to become the main literary trend. This thing may happen. Because *Harish Mangalam* hopefully says;

> "The fragrance of humanity is at the root of the Dalit literature. It is the story of

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> ordinary human beings. There is the fresh air of natural world. There is the blood flowing of 80% population of our nation. This fellow-feeling becomes all of ours."

'Sanviti' (1984) by *Harish Mangalam* and *Mohan Paramar* is the first Dalit literary critical work which includes the evaluation of Dalit writing of the first decade. Scholarly studied on all the early collections of the Dalit poems, edited and individual collections, are available in this work.

Dhirubhai Thakar writes in *'Arvachin Gujarati Sahitya ni Vikasrekha'* (The Progress Graph of Modern Gujarati Literature), (1995), vol: 5th, p. 274; "Then the flow of the Dalit poems continuously flows. As a result many poem-collections came out. *Madhukant Kalpit's 'Kesariya Tashar nu Akask'*(The Sky of Saffron Colour)(1979), *Suresh Bariya's 'Balatkar'* (The Rape) (1980), *Jayanti Paramar's 'Taleti* (The Foot of the Hill) (1981), *Shyam Sadhu's 'Yayavari'* (1981), *Naresh Patani's 'Tara Ghara Sudhi'* (Up to Your Home) (1981) etc." Like this way further we find *Mangal Rathod's* collection *'Baga Ma* (In the Garden). The Gujarati literary-historian should kindly consider that these collections are not the collections of the Dalit poems.

If we consider the graph of the contemporary Dalit poems and the Dalit poems written later on, the firm dedication in the Dalit poems we find in *K. B. Pandya's 'Chinagari'* (1982), but we find the lack of the soul of the poem. This poet has given the only collection then his pen stops. *Dalapat Chauhan,* the pioneer of the Dalit literature has given two poem-collections, To *Pachhi* (And Then) (1983) and *'Kya Chhe Surap.* (Where is the Sun?) (2000). He has contributed to the magazines' *Akrosh'* and *'Kalo Suraj'* to promote the Dalit literature. The misery of untouchability what he has suffered he expresses that with fury. In comparison of Song and Gazal his prose-poems are excellent. His excellence is not visible in his love poems of To *Pachhi'* but in the Dalit poems, there is the pain of the stick-hitting on the back in his poems. In *'Asprushya'* (The

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Untouchable)' the poet says; "Where on my body, limbs the (sacred) stanza of untouchability is written?" This Dalit poet gave the voice to the misery of *Dalit Samaj* and the expectations of the Dalits. He has given the stark reality of the Dalit society in a painful verbal composition. The poet has emerged as the strong voice. See his poem;

"Who is wounded

That is I

To whom since the centuries

You refuse to know...

You are talking about the wound,

I am living with the wound."

In *'Vyatha Pachisi'* (Twenty Five Poems on Misery) (1984), *Sahil Paramar,* the poet of the collection, bitterly satirized on the hypocrisy, pomp, show on the name of religion, unscrupulous state craft etc. His satiric tone is with anger. The passionate fury which was not fully expressed in *Naramad's* poems, that fury is bloodily presented in *Sahil's* poems. This poet uses the harsh tongue even harsh then *Akho,* the leading satirist of mainstream Gujarati literature. Some times his tongue seems impolite. This poet has strongly raised his voice in his poem against the interest of the established and the tradition of hereditary getting the benefits;

"We will not come even to drag

Dig out the mango-plantation

How much you can break, break

How much you can burst, burst

But we will not come"

These people, they are not human beings at all

On the name of protector

They are the bulls who chew up the soft and green grass."

Babaldas Chavada's (b. 1927) in his two poem-collections *'Atyacharo Thavado'* (Let the cruelty be

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committed) (1984), *'Bati na Ajavale'* (In the Light of the Lamp) (1991) as a social worker he uses hot tongue in his poems. He blows the bugle of social revolution and hits on the inequality, atrocities and corruption. He wants the entire change;

> "Among the human beings discrimination is maintained
>
> Oh! The monarch of Gujarat, destroy that!"

Harish Mangalam edited *'Bungiyo Vage'* (War Drum Plays on) (1984) and *Shankar Painter* gave the collection of poems *'Datarada no Devata'* (The God of Sickle). It is indeed pleasure to enjoy the songs of *Shankar Painter* in his own voice. *'Chyam La Atalu Phati Jyu sa*? (Hey why this much is torn?) '*Kaliyo Dholi' (Kaliyo,* the Drummer), *'Tod Chapaniya'* (Break the Begging Bowl) are his notice worth poems. This poet considers the oppressed, exploited human beings who are working in the farm as '*The God of the Sickle*', in a strong way, in a tone of the traditional *Bhajan* the poet composes the 'street-songs'. In his poems the sweetness of the North Gujarat dialect is enjoyable. To realize the extreme pain and with a heart-piercing cry he roars;

> "Hey Brother Break the Begging bowl
>
> Do not extend hands for begging
>
> By begging the Rights can not achieved
>
> Change the History
>
> Brother Break the Begging bowl."

Raman Vaghela's (1984) *'Sparsha ni Maheka'* (The Fragrance of Touch) the collection of songs and Gazals gives the new freshness. *'Nathi'* (No), *'Rupajiveeni nu Geet'* (The Song of Sex-Worker), *'Ameto Adhalak Anjya Dukha'* (Plentiful Pains We Have Put in Our Eyes), *'Have Vasya Kamad Tame Kholo'* (Now You Open the Closed Door), '*Ni Same'* (In front (Against) of Him), *'Karam Amaru Kathan* (Our Hard luck), *'Ame Adhavache Ubha Amasama'* (We are Standing in between the no-Moon Night) like these excellent poems we can get from him. In his poems we find fury on social hatred and inequality;

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"Unfortunate is our life, Oh fellow human,
hard is our existence

We inherited the wound, unfortunate is our
life fellow human."

"The moment of ours remains away from
the happiness

Here is no medicine to remove the pain."

In the poem collections *'Bayonet'* (1985), *'Padachhayo'* (The Shadow), (1986), *'Asadweepa'* (1996) (The Oasis of Dream-Land) and '*Tooneer*'(Leaves of Grass) (2000) *Pravin Gadhavi's* pen seems powerful. Right from the beginning of the Gujarati Dalit poetry he remains active and contributed independent poem-collections that is only the non-Dalit poet *Pravin Gadhavi.* His prose-Dalit poems highlight the historical thematic references and events and appeal universally. His individual feeling becomes the experiences of every sensitive human being. His poems are more sharp then the sharpened edge of the sword. The poems of this poet strike furiously on the Brahminical traditions and the novelty of expression is visible. In his poems sometimes the use of dialect creates the beauty of simplicity and sometimes metaphorical tongue creates profound and symbolical meaning;

"O, wood Cutter

Cut my shadow

LORCA

I can change my name,

My job,

My village,

My caste,

But my shadow

Will never leave me alone,

The broken cup of the tea

Again goes to the roof of the shed,

And next day morning again comes in the
hand of

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Khoda, the untouchable."

"Who is that still creates the wall

Among our blood-flow?

That must be broken

But the old-orthodox broke the *Babari* (Mosque)."

The poet has bitterly criticized the hypocrites who talk on social equality.

Avantikumar Dave writes' "The centre of his poem is the ordinary human being. This ordinary man means the person, who lives and becomes the victim of social hatred, frustration, exploited and oppressed human being. This human being is burnt in the furnace of injustice, his pain is the central expression of *Pravin's* major concern."

Raju Solanki's 'Mashal' is noteworthy work as a coordinator of the *'Jati Nirmulan Samiti'* (The Committee for Eradication of Caste). The poet, who brought the Dalit poetry and plays to the streets of the villages of Gujarat, bitterly has criticized the so called 'learned pigmies'. His poems become heavier because of pains. His poems; *"Bolo Babasaheb ni Jaya* (Shout the Victory of Babasaheb)", *Kayamat nu Geet (The Song of the Kayamat* (Last Day)", *"Shodho (Find out)", "Khado* (The Pit), *"Vado* (The Ghettoes) etc. are his noteworthy poems. He hits on the root of the problem, but sometimes his anger becomes intense fury. His poems are full of symbolism;

"My hypocrite husband be always in joyous mood

If rape is done then bring the torn out clothes of the parliament."

"The old man comes on the pregnant female camels

See on his hands, the bleeding wounds of sickle

Those who become kind cut their delicate wings

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The labourer's eyes are burning in the furnace of injustice

Who know the words exploitation, injustice, oppression

Only to walk with two legs was the big thing."

Ganesh Sindhava known as *'Badal'* by his pen-name has given *'Vishadita'*(Grief) (1987).The poet is disturbed by the ugly reality of the society. He gives the verbal body to the grief caused by the social rigid customs and inequality;

"The walls of my house are

Always growling at each other

In my home I feel the smell of my dead body."

Jeevan Thakcr has given the live picture of the mill-workers' misery, the mill its shutters are shutdown forever, in his collection *'Angalana Ansu'* (The Tears of the Tip of the Fingers) (1990). He raised his voice against those who killed the humanity and behave inhumanly. The poet says thus when he starts to find human being among the men;

"Whatever is with you that is due to my light,
Whatever is with me is due to your darkness."

Shivajee Rukhada writes Gazal with his pen-name '*Darda'* gave the collection *'Phul no Paryaya'* (The Option of the Flower) (1990). In his poems unique creativity is visible;

"How, both the margins restrict me!

Where I can write their long *Katha."*

"The lamp is lit on the back of tortoise

Yet the darkness gallops the tortoise."

The poet of *'Ame Andhare Ugela Padachhaya'*(We are the Shadows Grown in the Darkness) *Yashawant Vaghela* is disturbed by the helplessness and misery of the lower-castes (class). The poet boldly says;

"I tell them:

This head, is Sambooka's,

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These hands are Eklavya's,
This heart, Kabir's.
I am Jabali Satyakama.
But still I am a man."

Harish Mangalam the poet of the collection *'Prakamp'* (The Tremendous Tremor) (1991) is the bold voice of the Dalit literature. He gave *Geet* (songs), *Gazal* and prose-poems. In his poems he used dialect of his native place Mehsana. The use of rhythm and stress in his poems are noteworthy. In comparison of his poems *'Mer Bhundina'*(Aye Son of Bad-Woman), '*Ek Gometi Geet'* (A Song of The Village), the poems *"Dool* (Defeat), *'Ajavalu'* (The Light), *'Gulamahor'* are different in lingual expression. As lyrics these songs of the people of the village become more flowering. In his prose-poem there is no talk of peace but revolution so his tongue also seems revolting. A poet furiously says in his poem '*Fariyad Mate no Ek Case'* (A Case for the Complain);

"I will hang the God thus
Before the Sun!"

This poet raises his voice against injustice and atrocities. He makes to feel painful crude reality. By using the various symbols he gets his work done. In his poem *'Manasagiri no Abhava'*(Lack of Humanity) the poet bitterly criticizes hypocrisy, and deceiving behaviour of a man;

"Oh! Lack of humanity!
The fallen leaf
Let us join the fallen leaf to the stem with
spit
But the branch got the nature of scorpion..."

Ushanas (Gujarati poet) aptly writes; *'Prakamp* is the graph-story of vibration of feelings. It ultimately establishes him as the conscious-language user, the poet of the artistic expression of Dalit sensibility, the poet who knows the literary genius and the hopeful poet."

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In response to *Radheshyam Sharma's* one question *Harish Mangalam* says; "Any direction if you go, you have to accept the power of giant of casteism. Until you kill the monster, you cannot bring any financial or political change." This fact is appropriately presented in the poems of *""Prakamp'.*

In *Bipin Gohil's* poems of *'Bhunsata Manavi ne Ghuntu Chhu'* (I am Reshaping Man who is Gradually Rubbing Out) (1992) the pain and suffering of the gradually dying man is heard;

> "Since the thousands years lines on his palm
>
> Acidic rag is rubbing out
>
> Right from the root he is rubbed out by the thorn
>
> So called white colour
>
> Since the centuries it makes me tense."

Dedicated and hopeful for the social revolution the poet gives a song '*Karaman Pagar no Vichar*' (Oh! Mind Think about the Salary) in the style of *'Karaman Bhajan no Vepar'* (Oh! Mind Deal with Bhajan). Here the poet's sharp satirical tongue is indeed strong. To present the helpless condition of the Dalits the poet has the sharp words and expression;

> "Roar that much so the forest also hears
>
> How much deaf cities of ours are."
>
> The Moonless nights keeping shops open where sell the burning Suns,
>
> Oh, how cheaply, much darkness are sold!

Sadubhai Shah addresses *B.N. Vanakar* as the poet 'who travels in the dark and deep forest of injustice to find the heaven of equality'. His collection *'Over-bridge'* is published in 2001. The misery he felt in his life he does not present it in his poems as the volcanic eruption but very healthily and in a mature way it is expressed;

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"Now

We will compose the modern songs

And

Man will not be hated by his fellow being."

In *'Pratik'* (Symbol) the poet identifies himself as the symbol of tradition, the poet uses 'cow' as a symbol of orthodox tradition in *'Over-bridge'.* With grievance he says that we have done nothing for the Dalits;

"To cross the river *Vaitarani*

We will

Build the 'Over-bridge."

Manish Paramar's few Gazals are indeed noteworthy in *'Goranbho'* (The Cloudy Sky) edited by *Chandra Ben Shrimali.* In his Gazals the suffering-cry of the Dalits is heard;

"I keep the account of every drop of my tear,

I write many books of my misery."

A.K. Dodiya the poet of *'Suryonamukh'* (Before the Sun) (1995) composes the poems on the tears of the Dalits who are tired in the life-race. His pen has presented the reality of the Dalit colony;

"How can *Rama* imagine this scene?

In *Shambuka's* hand literacy and weapon."

Narasinh Ujamba in his poem collection *'Dhammavansh'* (Linage of Dhamma) (1996) hissing like a cobra against social evils, bad customs, Manu-mentioned Varnavyavastha, Brahminical attitudes and practice. Symbolically he presents the pains in his poem which he felt;

"I am carelessly left

Thrown

Decayed

Foul smelling

Know me I am the caste-lover ghost of 'Manu'."

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'Agnikana' (The Burning Particle) (1999) is a nice collection of *Nilesh Kathad's* Gazals. The poet became the victim of social inequality and inhuman behaviour of the upper castes. The poet experienced the segregation of human beings that pain of segregation emerges in his poem;

"See the condition of our colony,

The layers of our breath are opened."

"In this the city of smoke,

A being is in the gutter."

In the preface *B.N. Vanakar* has written; "In this poem collection self-experience of new era is flowering, here is the ring of truth of self-experience. Individual ideality is there. The different identity of human face is there. By satire he exposes the contemporary reality."

Maheshchandra Pandya warns a man from his fellow man in his collection *'Manasa Karade Chhe'* (1999) (Man Bites). By bad manners and bad way of living life of a man is expressed as the hissing in his poems;

"Beware, beware of the human race!

Because

Man also bites

A man bites *Ekalavya,*

A man also bites *Shambuka."*

Kanti Makawana who writes with his pen-name *'Katil'* (cruel) in his collection *'Satare Bolo Nahito Mata Bold'* (Say Truth Otherwise Keep Mum) (1999) gave noteworthy prose-poems. He has the mastery on creating bitter satire by different techniques. In his poem *'Gutter Ubharani'* (Overflowing Gutter) an upper-caste who does not allow even to enter in the compound of the house requests the Dalit to stop and clean the drainage-water and also brings him to his kitchen. At that time understanding the importance of self the Dalit says thus bluntly;

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"Throw away the talk of Dharma and Karma
Throw away the human race
But keep the dirt of untouchability
Do not even allow to flow the water clean
What I have told bluntly that he could not understand,
When the gutter was overflowing, (you) brought me up to the kitchen."

Shamat Paramar, the poet of *'Jwalamukhi'* (The Volcano) (1999) has boldly criticized the attitudes of the hypocrisy who sealed themselves in the cells of Dharma and Varna. He has given the aggressive reaction on the social reality;

"Yes, now you stop your claim to be human being,
Stone is in everyone's hand, neither *Geeta* nor
Quran?
As many religions different, Gods different too,
So a man is different from his fellow being."

Chandra Ben Shrimali, the poetess, is a social activist and ex-M.L.A. She has the vast experience the misery of the Dalit women. She gave the two collections *'Ovarana'* (Take away the Pains of Other's) (2000) and *'Mijaj'* (The Mood) (2001). Her poems express the angry temper of the exploited woman like a battle-cry. She blows the sword of anger on the women exploiter and insulter male-class. She becomes furious on the monsters who exploit women in various fields like social, religious, educational, political etc. Her poems *"Bala Majur ni Vyatha"* (The Tale of Child Labour's Suffering), *"Shaishava ni Smit'* (A Smile of Infant), '*Bala Gune Garani Vyatha'* (Suffering Story of a Child-Criminal), *Vikalang Shishuone'* (To the Cripple Infants) give the voice to the pains of poor helpless children. She makes the jumping board to *'Seeta', 'Draupadi' 'Bhavangribai', "Andh Kanya", "Fairy Girl', 'Tulasidas', Ambedkar', 'Manujee'*, and *'Gandhiji'* and presents crude reality of women's suffering. She furiously demands 'Reservation for Women';

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Standing on the Threshold of the 21st Century

"Sinking in the west Oh! The Suns
Old and hollow – thick skinned
Shaken because of the old age- lustrous for chair!
A dilapidated crenellated walls..
The years you have passed that much you will not
see again
Hear this our battle-cry
The dawn of the 21st century is ours!
No doubt-that is ours...."

In addition of these poets Nirava Patel, Chandu Maheriya, Balakrishna Anand, Arvind Vegada, Hari Paramar, Jayant Paramar, Purushotam Jadava, Nagin Paramar, Jayanti Makawana, Ujamshi Paramar, Harajeevan Dafada, Mukesh Boricha, etc. poets and the poetess like Usha Makawana, Meena Kamle, Jasumati Paramar, Priyanka Kalpit, Usha Parekh etc have contributed to the Dalit poetry.

Nirava Patel is one of the founding fathers of Dalit literature in Gujarat but still he has not given the individual poem collection. But he remains active secretary of the "Swabhiman Foundation for Dalit Literature. His anger is visible in his poems like '*Ma me Bhala ke Mere Bhai*' (Mother who is Kind me or my brother), '*Sata Punchhadi Valo Undar*' (The Rat with Seven Tails), "*Namashesh*' (Destroyed), "*Bahiskrut Phool*' (Boycotted Untouchable Flowers), '*Maro Shamaliyo*'. (My Lord Krishna), "*Abhan Hotato Saru*' (It would be Better if I remains Illiterate).

Purushotam Jadava's poem '*Paga nu Kank Karo*' (Do Something of the Leg) is metaphorical and satirical. The poet uses the dialect to draw the picture of 'leg', here the leg is a symbol of Dalit man;

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That's why make the difference, one is long, another short,

And it was not enough so created walls in between,

But this '*Deyor*'(abuse)! Started to destroy,

Do something of this leg."

Priyanka Kalpit, the poetess of *"Hasiyama Hun"*"(I am Inside the Margin) (2000) in her prose-poems like '*Ame*' (We), '*Stri*'(Woman), '*Artha*' (The Meaning) she expresses the extreme misery of women in simple tongue. In her poem '*Ame*' (We) she criticizes the hypocrisy who get their photograph by putting on the black-blanket and then they remove the black blanket in the darkness. In her poem '*Stri*' she paints the painful picture of an unfortunate woman who failed to get the life-support. In her poem '*Artha*'(Meaning) she has painted the picture of helplessness of the exploited woman, see the Dalit sentiment expressed in *Haiku;*

"Do not uproot
Pains – stay here
Trembling it is."

In Moonless night
Sadness at the threshold
Earthen lamp lights.

Forming groups
Misery asks me
How am I"

Harajeevan Dafada in his Gazal collection '*Angat Vyathani Vato*'(The Story of Personal Misery) warns to the orthodox who insist on the practice of *Varnavyavastha;*

"Before hating (me) check it,

Blood flowing in my vein is red."

Mukesh Boricha's in his Gazal '*Joea*' (Needed) revengefully says;

"Since ages we have carried their excreta but that

Weight we want hundred times in many kg's."

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Arvind Vegada abuses the white wolves who favour the practice of untouchability in his poem *'Hadaselo'* (Push Aside). At the end of his poem he says;

> "He is a man,
>
> We are not human beings
>
> Because we have lifted up the dead bodies
> of our shadows on the shoulders and we
> have not learnt to push the air aside."

Jayanti Makawana's 'Hua Keshava Ganda Bhangi' is noteworthy poem. In this poem the poet has successfully created the central being of the poem;

> "On Ash..ram road is our family firm.
>
> Like an anchored boat by the footpath,
>
> Is my wheel-barrow bearing my name.
>
> It is my father's imported ambassador;
>
> (Its key-chain hanging round my neck!)"

But here in this poem a *Bhangi's* misery strongly appeals to human-hearts. A poem in a satirical style creates the tragic picture of the oppressed and exploited.

Mongol Rathod, Kisan Sosa, Shyam Sadhu, Madhukant Kalpit, Pathik Paramar, Kanval Kundalakar, Sanju Vala and other poets of the Dalit Samaj contributed to the Gujarati poetry before the Gujarati Dalit literature has come into existence. These poets, connected with the mainstream Gujarati literature have also given the Dalit poetry. These poets' roots are lying in Dalit Samaj so in their poems anyway the Dalit sentiments are emerging. As the members of the Dalit Samaj their individual experiences especially and aesthetically emerged in their work. A few Gazals of *Shyam Sadhu* express the painful Dalit-experience;

> "With sadness in eyes people are many here,
> I feel your city is a deep sigh (of despair).
>
> "If the clothes are wet, dry them out,
> But where to dry out the sadness?"

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Kisan Sosa, the poet of the Gazals *"Anhi'* (Here), '*Khobar Chhe'* (I Know), *'Tarasyo Hato'* (I was Thirsty), he emerges as the poet of different mood. In his own style he presents the evils of the Dalit Samaj;

"Leave the emptiness knocking at the home

The boy has gone out to earn for his livelihood."

Madhukant Kalpit's poems *'Dagh'* (The Stain), *'Ghor Avajoni Vachethee'* (From the Shrill Cries), *'Mane Adhikar Apo'* (Give me my Rights), *'Amadavad'* (Ahmedabad) are excellent because of the symbols and self-experience;

"Crushed under the road roller

Of inhuman behaviour

The ugly face of my tragic history..."

Mansukh Gaijan in his *'Gaurava Chhe'* (Proud of) poem he makes fun and bitter satire on the progress of the people and he joins the pride of the nation with the top of the gutter. He creates the crude reality of the post-independent India;

"People made progress!

That's why

I am proud of the top of gutter."

Pathik Paramar the poet of 'Bahiskrut' (Boycotted) (2003) gives the excellent songs and Gazals. On his poem *'Gokul Gama Ane Kaniyo'* (The Village *Gokul* and *Kaniyo)* *Mahavirsinh Chauhan* writes; *"Pathik Paramar* symbolically suggests the collective joy after seeing kite flying that is a tragic reality of human existence;

"When in massive flocks the kites,

Above the vas encircle skies;

Half-defined feeling villagers have

As an animal death they sense.

Meat is cooked in every house,

The smell is in the air.

It fills the nostrils of the high."

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What sort of beauty we will call to it? It is essential to create the situation where a man reacts with fellow being and becomes sensitive human being and behaves properly. The poet neither complains nor becomes angry but his experiences neutrally in an authentic form presents. And the poet presents the unbearable, inhuman reality before us.

In addition of these poets *Moun Biloly, Karasanadas Luhar, Girin Joshi, Dr. Hasyada Pandya, Ramesh Patel, Krishna Dave, Late. Ramesh Oza, Late. Himmat Khatasuriya, Manilal N. Patel 'Jagat Mitra', Sarup Dhruva,* etc. have also contributed to the Dalit poetry. But the independent collections of the Dalit poems are only given by the Dalit poets. The poets who contributed the independent collections are the dedicated poets. They are fully dedicated to the Dalit literature. They are different from the poets who occasionally write the Dalit poems. Their calculation is different. They aim the arrow at the Brahminical Varnavyavastha which pains them. Their creation hit all aspects, hypocrisy, deceivers, and the human-haters. The Dalit sensibility, resulted from *Manu* preached high and low Varnavyavastha is capable to uproot the poisonous tree of discrimination. Their aim is to re-establish human dignity. They indicate to all the tricks and masks which become hurdles in their life-progress. Search for the identity is the centre of the new interpretation of history from the Dalit perspective. Their desire is to awaken the dying human sensibility and to create social revolution.

Right from the birth a Dalit gets firm label of high and low and life-long he becomes the victim of caste-based injustice. The tradition, which worth to throw away, if maintained, it hits on the national integration. All the traditions are not worth to be maintained, that voice is heard from the Dalit poetry.

The political activists caught in the web of desire to get power so to maintain caste-based vote-bank, they widen the gap between different castes thus indirectly they are

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breaking the chain of the unity. They are changing the masks and on the name of secularism these hypocrites, lustrous for the chair have left nothing to spoil human relations. Dalit creators tell their story in a satirical and symbolical ways.

Brahminical dogmatic practice, superstitions religiously supported, religious belief, bad customs all these made the human beings cripple and coward. The Dalit writers angrily warn on the harmful hurdles which are in the way of scientific progress of human beings. They bitterly attack on the root-causes of the communal riots.

Karna, Shambuka, Ekalavya, Meghamayo, Jabali etc. who became the victims of any type of injustice, by using their myth and symbols, the persons who belong to the lower Varna and become the victims of injustice, by their writing the Dalit writers put first the feeling of self-respect. Man must be accepted as human being. To hate human existence means to laugh at the basic values of humanity. The Dalit-writers tell this story in a bold voice.

In connection with the contemporary reality the Dalit writers present genuine feelings of their heart and head. In their expression their pain is felt. The poets of the exploited society compose their poems by using the blood at the place of ink, they boldly challenge the social discrimination. They interpret the caste-based inequality and suggest the solution. These poems have removed the curtain from many wrong assumptions.

Shirish Panchal says to them who are under the illusion that everything in mainstream literature is excellent and everything in Dalit literature is immature;

> "If the creation of the Dalit literature is immature so in comparison of them who say so called upper castes' work is not immature? But if caste-issue, power, and on the base of power many hypocrisy are included in the excellent literature so why one should hesitate to accept hopeful,

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> satisfactory aspects from the Dalit literature. At least there is truth of self-experience, and honesty and from that genuine art without fail gradually emerges."

Mahavirsinh Chauhan considers it full of prejudice and he remarks:

> "Actually in Dalit poems various techniques and styles of expression are implemented. In the Dalit poetry *geet, gazal,* prose-poems and the importance of metaphor, symbols and various poetic devices are accepted. To express poets' feeling-thoughts, inner-self, the things to express self-experience whatever things and methods are useful they use them."

It is essential to evaluate the Dalit literature by considering the basic elements of the literature. *Baburao Bagul,* the Marathi Dalit writer says:

> "Dalit literature is the enemy of untouchability and slavery. It has also the enmity against the discrimination and pains. Dalit literature will strongly struggle against the untouchability and slavery how long that will be on this soil and the society. That is the genuine Dalit literature, which establishes human being as god, more important than religion and region, strongly condemns caste-Varna, and liberates human being and honours him, dignifies him."

Considering the progress of two and half decades' journey of Gujarati Dalit poetry it is observed, this trend of poetry has gradually made successful progress. It faced many challenges. In the beginning of the 21st century it has established its unique identity. Its forms are different, different is its voice. Language, technique of expression, artistic skill, forms, symbolical use etc. in poetic devices it becomes rich. Keeping the lamp of dedication continuously lighting it reaches near to the art. Keeping the aims the Dalit poetry has rapidly progressed. It is impossible to hide

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its original form. Day by day the Dalit poets are increasing. The Dalit poetry is now in the hands of dedicated experts. It is the sign of bright future of Gujarati literature.

II

At the end of the 8th decade when the '**Dalit literature**' has started to emerge by the Dalit writers of the Dalit Samaj, at that time there was uproar on the name of 'term' of different type of literary trend. Some felt their monopoly is looted, some felt their sacred-thread is burning, other felt their monopolized empire is collapsed. As a result about the 'term' plenty confusing hurdles are created, all the efforts are done to avoid permanently the term in the history of Gujarati literature. A few uproar, little anger was expressed. The Dalit writers have given the jaw-breaking response to them who opposed the term. In Gujarati literature there is *'Jain Sahitya', 'Charani Sahitya', 'Sahitya of Swaminarayan Sampradaya', 'Kabirpanthi Sahitya', 'Non-Jain literature in Poetic Form'.* They particularly established class, do not have any objection on any division, then why they all nauseate on the name of 'Dalit literature"?'The question was raised but ultimately everything was subsided. The time has done its job. In the flow of time the burning 'lava' was frozen. Gradually the term 'Dalit literature' has become used for the specific meaning. This thing has not happened first time, at the place of *"Kalpan,'* (image)' *'Chitra Kalpan,'* (picturesque-image), *'Pratirup'* (Reflection)', *'Bhavaptratik* (Sentimental image), *'Dhwani Chitra'* (Implied meaning), *'Kalp Chitra'* (picturesque-image) etc. terms were presented, as the synonym of *'Laghukatha' 'Ladhima', 'Kshana nu Shilpa'* (The Art of a Moment), *'Prasangik* (Writing of the event), *'Arm Katha',* 'Ekapanani Varta (A Story of a page)', 'Tuki tuki Varta (A Short short story)', *Kathanika* (Short story)' etc. terms were used and ultimately the terms 'image' and *'Laghukatha'* remain established, that thing happened also for the Dalit literature.

To come out of Dalit literature in Gujarati literature is, as a matter fact, not an unimaginable event. Similarly

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the authors of the Dalit literature have the painful history of centuries. Socially, educationally and economically thus three leveled backward caste people became the victims of unbearable injustice of untouchability since the thousands of years. Their pains are of thousands of years old. They became the victims of 'Manu mentioned Varnavyavastha'. Shameful evils resulted from the untouchability gave them experiences of inhumanity. The superstitions flowered on the name of religion and caste-based have put them in the insulted situation. They did not get the right to fetch the drinking water from the public wells. Killings of **'Ranamalpur'** are the evidences of the fact. Even in the government academic institutes there was ban on these people to drink water. What Dalit Messiah Dr. Ambedkar has experienced during his academic life is indeed tragic. They could not enter in the temples, they could not use the glass for drinking water in the public restaurants but they had to drink water in their cupped-hands. Their inner administration, issues, experiences are unbearable and unique in many ways. Their customs, traditions, life-style, beliefs are totally different from the roots. Depressed, exploited, oppressed, backward-caste, Dalit, these untouchable people's inner story of sufferings is totally opposite to the touchable people. Their unique world of self-experience is fully flowered in their creations. That is the reason why the 'Dalit literature' emerges totally different from the mainstream Gujarati poetic trend. Dalit literature, flowered in the new form of creativity, by no means can be neglected. Gujarati literature has got many milestone creations by the Dalit writers.

Gujarati Dalit literature has actively prospered in these forms poetry, story, novel, drama, criticism etc, out of these literary forms Dalit literature is fully flowered in poetry. The Dalit literature is mainly created in poetic form here the Dalit writers' unique and individual experiences of day to day life, social, family issues, economical and the place where they are working strongly presented. Different from the contemporary poetic trend the Dalit poetry

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diverted in different direction, that is mainly in prose-poems. The Dalit poets have also expressed their powerful sentiments in poetic forms like *Geet, Gazal,* and *Muktak* etc. The poetry has come out from the contemporary poetic tradition and makes us feel to fresh emotional world. Here the expression of emotion is clearly visible.

Shankar Painter in his poem collection *'Bungiyo Vage'* presents stark reality of *'Kaliyo Dholi's* life.

> "By begging the left-overs *Kaliyo Dholi* fills
> his stomach
>
> By abuse, insult and hatred habituated
> *Kaliyo Dholi."*

Here in this poem the poet has created the pen-picture of stark reality of the life of *Kaliyo Dholi,* it is unique. But there are little weak points too, particularly about rhyme-rhythm, selection of words and *Geet* as á form. Shankar Painter's another song *'Tod Chapaniya Chana re Bhaila'* (Hey Brother Break the Begging Bowl) also includes merits and demerits.

In Gujarati Dalit songs *Nagin Paramar's* consciousness of poetic expression is viable in his poems. *'Sukhathi Lidhachhe Ame Chhuta Coieda Ane Dukhathi Karichhe Sagai'* (Divorce we got from the Happiness, we are engaged with Unhappiness). His songs expresses intense emotions and create new atmosphere.

In the Dalit poetry we find the presentation of the unique questions like, untouchability, blind-superstitions, caste-conflict, exploitation etc. The Dalit writers express through their pens that a person should not be considered high and low on the base of his caste but by his virtues and culture. The Dalit poems are available on social inequality like Varna and caste discrimination, rapes, with revolt and written in the Dalit atmosphere, concerned to the Dalits' profession. *Pathik Paramar's* poem *'Gukuliyu Gam Ane Kaniyo'* is the example of it here the detailed picture of *Kaniya's* activity is given;

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"O! little village Gokul!
Kaniyo lives a different life.
On cattle thrive the villagers.
When *Kaniyo* makes the cords from the carrion
He breathes heavily."

Here in this song the poet has created the picture of quite contrast between touchable and untouchable in the village '*Gukuliyu*', it creates unique attraction.

> "After opening the carcass, *Kaniyo* with his little son goes to the river to bathe and while bathing he urinates in the river-water, drinking the water of the same river all the people from the high-castes' defiled by *Kaniyo*, What's a terror?"

End of this sort of song is not only full of extreme misery but also created unique beauty.

Harish Mangalam in his poem *'Damiyal Local'* from his collection *'Prakamp'* presents misery in a prose style of the mill labour the mill is closed forever. In this poem the 'protagonist' of the poem struggles to leave the hereditary profession but he becomes the victim of the crucial social structure and he has to go back to his caste-based job; "Oh *Kaniya*! Years have passed when I left the village, In comparison of this far better is my earthen *Kund* and *Nakhlo*" (Kund means earthen hollow filled with water to make the leather soft and Nakhlo means the iron-tool used by Dalits for shoe-making or repairing the footwear), the poem begins with dialogue of the *Kathanayak* and the repetition of the same expression appeals extremely to the sensitive readers. 'Cough sticks in my lungs like the handful of cotton", "I thrust the chimneys of the closed mills in my ears" this sort of images and figure of speech make the poem enjoyable.

Raju Solanki, the poet of the collection *'Mashal'* composes the poems of extremely suppressed passion. He bitterly criticizes the pigmy intelligent. He satirized all

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those are corrupted flatters, corrupted scientists, and sellers of the destroying goods and the barbarous who create the disastrous violence. His commitment in his prose-poems makes his poems strong and powerful. '*Raghala,* pardon me friend' the poet says;

> "The hot melted lead is poured down in my delicate virgin ears, since that spiritual darkness of the Upanishads darkens my eyes."

Here the poet's satire on religious tradition is very sharp, but in this poem the poet has used the sophisticate language in the mouth of '*Malo Dalit'* of Patan is not appropriate, otherwise this poem could be more effective.

Dalapat Chauhan the poet of the collection of To *Pachhi'* pictures the heartfelt reality of the Dalits who are put in the insulted situation. Sharp pen of this poet presents the ring of truth in the poems. See the beginning of the poem 'Untouchable';

> "The first day of the school
>
> The event was the exactly of *Pralaya*
>
> Not with the trembling hand the first alphabet
>
> My heart burning like burning' Sahara desert,
>
> I wrote my life-story
>
> Since that I am
>
> untouchable...untouchable..untouchable I am.
>
> Echoing in every cell of existence."

The painful experience of the childhood pains to the poet like a sting of scorpion. The line of hatred drew in the childhood became stronger gradually and the poet cries out with fury;

> "Hey the God of hatred
>
> Still today I am finding
>
> On which part of my body the *Rucha* – the holy preaching
>
> Of Untouchability is written."

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Sahil Paramar by using the satire presents the realistic picture of crude reality in ancient connection. Away from the traditional way the poet marches on the novel path and roars thus;

> "The steps have born newly in a form of the 'word'
>
> None can prevent the marching of the steps
>
> Does not matter today the climate of objection is thickened
>
> But it will not last long without accepting the steps."

Mangal Rathod in his prose-poem *'Varasama'* (Inheritance) is hopeful to drive away the darkness. The poet has given the candlestick as a present to his children which he inherited from his forefathers because;

> "Perhaps
>
> This thing may happen
>
> I may not live up to the coming days of darkness,
>
> Perhaps it may not be yet
>
> Give it to the third one.
>
> My forefathers
>
> Left only the candle stick
>
> In inheritance
>
> For the days of darkness.

Here the candle stick is the symbol of good faith. To fight against the darkness, struggle against the pains and problems is continuously going on, it is the tragic end of the life of Dalit.

Nirava Patel's poem *'Maro Shamaliyo'* gives sweet experience because of the dialectal use. Except God who is the support to the poor, miserable people? The mother of the daughter worries about the daughter's *'Anu'* the post marital gift which is a social custom, to perform it in a better way she vows to offer specific thing to deity-Goddess

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Chamunda, but in this occasion there was to favourable situation so she can offer good things. But as lord Krishna has helped *Narasinh Mehta* while his daughter's post marital ceremony was going on, similarly the young wife of Kshatriya died and her dead body was covered with the new red cloth, the mother of the Dalit's daughter how smiles, see the lines;

> "The red pyre burns on
>
> The red shroud flutter on the branch of *'Ankado'* caltrops
>
> Mother of the daughter of the Dalit smiles,
>
> Smiles that daughter-in-law...
>
> Its Ok, if the men who burn the dead boy,
>
> Disappear, rapidly I will run to the burning-*ghat,*
>
> God is the supporter to the miserable like me!"

Here the poet has excellently combined two different events of sorrow and joy, marriage and the death. The poet has exactly painted the picture of the psycho-world of the mother of the daughter of a Dalit. But here in this poem the young wife of a Kshatriya dies because of the vow of goddess *Chamunda* presents baseless superstition which is not suitable to the Dalit literature.

Govind Paramar in his poem *'A Loko'* (Those People) exposes the truth of the communalists. This poem reminds us what happens during the *'Rathayatra'* and *'Mohamtn'.* The poet says;

> "Those people
>
> Made the big segregated sections and govern there
>
> When they get the opportunity, they creep in others'
>
> section and return safely after destroying
>
> And then.....
>
> Dance, jump."

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Here in this poem the poet expresses his strong anger against the communal factors quarrelling on the name of *'Rama'* and *'Rahim'*. The poet feels, now the time has come to think concretely about the people who know the language of sword, *lathi* (stick), and daggers.

Chandu Maheriya in his poem *'Kavyanu Mulya'* (The Value of Poem) comes with the black Sun, it is his vow to be a revolutionary. But the poet feels sorry for them who can not understand the bright light of the black Sun. He says;

> "If the one word of revolt will knock the ears of
>
> *Thakur Vajesang's* deaf ears
>
> I feel the value of my poem will be invaluable."

Jayanti Makawana's poem *'Hu Keshava Ganda Bhangi'* is noteworthy because of its language and expressed emotion. Here in this poem the poet hits the right note on the character-sketch of *'Keshava Ganda Bhangi'*. In this line "*On the Ashram Road is our family firm'* the typical mood of the protagonist is emerges nicely;

> "Like an anchored boat by the footpath,
>
> Is my wheel-barrow bearing my name.
>
> It was my father's imported ambassador;
>
> (Its key–chain hanging round my neck!)"

The poem presents exactly the protagonist *Keshava Ganda Bhangi's* personality, typical mood and his character in a picturesque style. A sweeper's job he is doing in the Municipal Corporation of Ahmedabad, he inherited from his father. The first part of the poem highlights the character of the protagonist and the last part the protagonist accepts his broom as the great companion simultaneously the poet exposes the corrupt Dalit supervisor who supervises the cleaning job. He believes like him his son is the inheritor of this 'reserved' job of sweeping. Here the poet's satirical use of the term 'reserved' is very effective. The statement '*The big giant like announcements declaring the liberation of bhangis from pain challenges my timidity*' becomes highly suggestive.

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Pravin Gadhavi in his poem *'Shastra Sanyas'* to destroy the line drawn between Dalits and non-Dalits puts the universal conditions appropriate to the universal being;

> "Would you endure if your Draupadi
>
> Garlands our *Galiya* in Swayamwar?
>
> Would your *Arjun* accept our *Raili*
>
> Like *Chitragandha* in new form?
>
> Come, let us take turns in disposing dead cattle."

"We all are of one nation, God is one, we are the children of one religion." — The poet has given the sharp and the straight response in this poem to the hypocrites, deceivers and pretentious who shout loudly thus and say sects and caste-barriers are man-made.

Madhukant Kalpit the poet of the *'Kesariya Tashar nu Akash'* (The Sky of Saffron Shades) in his poem *'Mane Adhikar Apo'* (Give me Right) pictures naked reality of the golden jubilee celebration of independence;

> "Covering the fortune like the scattered, burnt out sawdust from the fire-pan
>
> The naked children are sleeping in the front part of the house.
>
> In their eyes marvelously passes the chariot of golden jubilee celebration plying the bugles.
>
> OR
>
> Hanging the sack on their shoulders
>
> To find the plastic and metals
>
> Their youthful daughters
>
> Searching their future
>
> In the *Kacharapeti* (Box of wastes)."

The line like this presents crude reality of the contemporary India. Here in this poem the tragic picture of the family of a cotton-mill employee is presented. It is indeed painful.

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Among the Gujarati Dalit poets, in the literary form of *Geet-Gazal* the powerful Dalit sensibility is presented in many poems of *Kishan Sosa.* "The *Mahant* climbs on the Stage and afraid" this type of his Gazal creates unique image. See the beginning of his Gazal *"Anhi'* (Here);

"Children we are of the same land here,

Came from the same gate of heaven,

You and I: only predominates here"

While evaluating the progress of the Dalit poems of two decades we can get many excellent poems. The Dalit poets have used their hands with their experiences against injustice like cruelty, social inequality, they also included anger, revolt, reservation, communalism, religion orthodoxy etc. These poems are thoughtful, profound and useful to the society they are artistic and able to acquire new literary success.

The situations presented by the Dalit poets are fresh and live. These poets try to present all the aspects of the Dalit-life with the smallest detail. Their struggle for livelihood effectively presented in their own tongue. Theme (Image), situation, and language are novel in the Dalit poetry. The Gujarati Dalit poetry which realizes us novel feelings is hopeful and attractive.

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12

Reversing Centrality and Marginality : Gujarati Dalit Literature vs. Gujarati Adalit Literature

— Dr. Rupalee Burke

"Indian literary history and theory, as well as the teaching of Indian literatures are spectacularly silent about Dalit literature. Yet, Dalit cultural and critical productions make a significant critical intervention in the thinking and writing about Indian society, history, culture and literature", says Alok Mukherjee (Mukherjee, 1). This statement throws up serious concerns regarding the polemical juxtaposition of mainstream literature and dalit literature in the Indian context. The term 'dalit' literature has literary, cultural, religious, social, political, historical and economic implications. Like other marginalized literatures, especially Black literature and women's writing, Gujarati dalit literature started off as 'protest' literature and has been looked upon as 'oppositional' literature by Gujarati mainstream literature. This paper seeks to examine precisely these concerns with specific reference to Gujarati mainstream literature and Gujarati dalit literature. The term 'dalit literature' is used in this paper to mean literature written mainly by writers belonging to the scheduled castes.

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The paper is divided into three sections. Section-I traces the trajectory of both Gujarati dalit literature and Gujarati lalit literature and in doing so examines how Gujarati dalit literature is an 'anti-caste' literary movement, an ideological discourse that runs counter to the aesthetics of Gujarati lalit literature. Section-II is an attempt to show how Gujarati dalit literature is an important aspect in the process of identity formation of dalits in Gujarat. The paper culminates in Section-III which engages in taking stock of how Gujarati dalit literature has successfully established its separate, distinct identity by assuming centrality, by viewing Gujarati lalit literature as adalit literature and thereby pushing the latter towards marginality.

Dalit literature in India continues to receive step-fatherly treatment by mainstream or canonical literature. The binary opposition is essentially between 'dalitism' and 'brahminism' and is all the more pronounced in Gujarat. Tapan Basu (2002:xix) notes "Distance pollution, the notion that the lower castes might "pollute" the upper castes unless a prescribed distance was maintained between them, however, never existed in the north to the extent that it existed in the south or the west." He further admits that "a lot remains to be done in the field of eradicating caste prejudices." (2002:xxi) The implication is the overlapping of the literary and the social arenas enforcing brahmanical superiority over the dalits in both society and literature.

An overview of Gujarati lalit (mainstream literature, having derived the name from its obsession with the 'beautiful') clearly indicates the predominant presence of Brahmin writers. It is against this backdrop of Gujarati lalit literature, considered central/mainstream, great/aesthetic, that dalit literature came to be considered marginal/peripheral, little/unaesthetic. The two 'currents' are fundamentally oppositional. It is out of this situation that dalit literature begins to define itself as being essentially different in nature, scope, implications and direction.

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Gujarati lalit literature was pre-dominantly occupied with notions of 'purity', 'pleasure' and 'aesthetics', having grown out of the legacy of Sanskrit literature in its initial stage in the Madhyakalin Yuga or medieval age. Writers in this age were chiefly saints (bhakti poets) who wrote poetry on devotional and philosophical themes. Like all devotional literature, the literature of this phase was God-centric. Glorification of divinity was privileged over human emotions, thoughts and imagination, perfection of structure and form were aspects that didn't matter at all.

With the advent of the modern phase (1850 onwards) Gujarati lalit literature underwent a sea-change. Influenced heavily by western literature and culture led to a widening of its horizon which is evident in the variety of its themes. Western education, ideas and missionary activities led to a reformist attitude in the writers of the Sudhara Yuga or Age of Reformation. Social evils such as the practice of sati, child-marriage, female infanticide, superstitions were attacked and widow-remarriages, education of the girl-child, etc. were applauded in the literature of this period. Here were writers who were reformers, who used social, mythological and historical themes in poetry, drama and fiction with the sole motive to circulate reformist ideas. Literature until this point was in stark contrast to the literature of the subsequent period where the principle of 'art for art's sake' is central to literature. Narmad, (who studied English literature) the first Gujarati essayist modelled his essays on the English essays. The first Gujarati novelist Nandshankar also borrowed heavily from English novels.

In the Pandit Yuga or Age of Scholars, the counterpart of the Victorian age, literature was written by scholar-writers and with highly educated and cultured readers in mind. It was in the hands of these 'high priests' that literature became 'high brow'. Themes of social reform were pushed aside to make way for lofty themes of love, nature and divinity (satyam, shivam, sundaram). Realism was

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conspicuous by its absence. Among writers who pursued perfection of literary expression, Ramanbhai Nilkanth was the only exception, the son of the social reformer Mahipatram Nilkanth, he wrote literature which looked back towards the Sudhara Yuga and forward to the Gandhi Yuga (Gandhian Age). He criticized the scourge of untouchability, casteism, etc.

The literature of the Gandhi Yuga revolved round truth, duty, morality and reality. Art in literature was forced to take a back seat. The underprivileged and deprived common man occupied centre-stage in the literature of this period. In literature, realism combined with socialism replaced the idealism of the preceding period. Capitalism came under heavy attack and the corroding effect of science, technology and industrialization on human values became the chosen theme of the literature of this period. Gandhiji denounced literature created for entertainment. It was the beauty of truth that was sacred to him. The principle of 'art for life's sake' evolved out of Gandhian thought and pervaded the literature of this period.

In the Anu-Gandhi Yuga (Post-Gandhian Age), pure literature i.e. art-oriented literature became self-centric and literary activity was thought to be for the pleasure of the self (nijananda). As the precursor of the Adhunik Yuga (Modern Age), the literature of this period turned towards urban themes.

In the Adhunik Yuga, literature parts ways with literary traditions The literature of this age is experimental. Individualism rules the roost. Existentialism colours the literature of this age and futility of life is its most common theme.

The literature of the Sudhara Yuga and the Gandhi Yuga, with their engagement with social issues, seems to have paved the way for the literature that was to be called dalit literature. The striking feature of the literature of the Gandhi Yuga was that its chief aim being 'gramoddhar' (rural welfare), the village and rural life found expression

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in literature. However, although lower castes and women characters are depicted in good measure, the attitude was more of sympathy and compassion rather than welfare. The literature of this age was short-lived and was pushed into oblivion as Gujarati literature proceeded along its journey. It was as if lalit literature was not prepared to compromise on artistic standards. Did it feel endangered? Perhaps Gandhiji's insistence that literature should be written in a language easily comprehensible to vankars (weavers) and koshiyas (men drawing water with leather buckets to irrigate fields) did not agree with the aesthetic constitution of the canonical writers.

It is interesting to note that a whole group of novelists are recognized as regional writers in Gujarati mainstream literature and their literature constitutes 'regional literature', a new breed within the lalit fold. Eshwar Petlikar depicts Charotar in his novels, Pitambar Patels novels are based in North Gujarat, the Bhal region is the locale of Pushkar Chandrawarkar's novels, whereas Saurashtra features in Chunilal Madiya's novels. These are mostly non-brahmin writers, most of them Patels (a farmer community) and write from a sociologist's point of view. This accounts for their privileging documentation over artistic creation in their novels. The writers graphically describe the communities of their respective regions, the way of life, customs etc. The literature is region-specific social literature, rich in content but one that falls short of canonical aesthetic standards. Jhaverchand Meghani, the Father of regional literature and known for his contribution to folk literature, wrote novels based in the land of Saurashtra. The region is the protagonist in his fiction. Pannalal Patel also wrote regional fiction. Sabarkantha (North Gujarat) features in his novels. However, these two writers maintained artistic standards and were acclaimed for their ability to write artistically. They shaped an 'anandaloka' (world of joy) from the soil of their land without resorting to any kind of social message.

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In sharp contrast to the 'anandaloka' is the 'dukhaloka' (world of sorrow), of Dalit literature. By placing lalit literature alongside dalit literature, one sees two contrary states of literature. One is reminded of Blake's 'Songs of Innocence and of Experience'. Gujarati dalit literature is an 'anti-caste' literary movement, an ideological discourse that runs counter to the aesthetics of Gujarati lalit literature. Dalit literature is defined by Sharankumar Limbale as:

> ... precisely that literature which artistically portrays the sorrows, tribulations, slavery, degradation, ridicule and poverty endured by Dalits. This literature is but a lofty image of grief.

Every human being must find liberty, honour, security, and freedom from intimidation by the powerful elements of society. These values are now being articulated in a particular kind of literature - its name being Dalit literature. Recognizing the centrality of the human being, this literature is thoroughly saturated with humanity's joys and sorrows. It regards human beings as supreme, and leads them towards total revolution. (Limbale, 30)

Rivers of ink have been poured out to define dalit literature; persons and words may differ, but it can be said that there is a near consensus on what constitutes dalit literature. A heavily debated issue is whether only that literature written by born dalit writers can be called dalit literature. Gujarati dalit literature has always been Catholic in outlook and inclusive. Some extremely committed non-dalit writers have from its initial stage contributed to dalit writing and publishing, and continue to occupy space in dalit literature, the most noteworthy being the case of Pravin Gadhvi, the prolific writer, who unlike other non-dalit writers has chosen to de-caste and don the Dalit mantle. He only writes specifically dalit literature. As a corollary, Pravin Gadhvi's name is mentioned in the same breath as say Dalapat Chauhan and Sahil Parmar.

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Dalit literary activity commenced in Gujarat around 1960. Dalit consciousness was first stirred in 1975 with atrocities against dalits and it gained expression in dalit literature. The two anti-reservation agitations of 1981 and 1985 were responsible for the volcano-like eruption of dalit writing on the literary scene. It was a new kind of literature, very different from what had been written so far. These were activist-writers, the oppressed themselves writing about themselves and writing with a vengeance. The motive of these writers was clear. They were not prepared to keep silent anymore. As Bernadine Evaristo, Black British writer says, "We have to write about ourselves. Otherwise we won't exist in literature or history." (Hindu, 4) It is through dalit literature, their very own literature that the dalits have found a rightful place and authentic voice in the literature and history of Gujarat.

In its first phase, Dalit poets spewed anger and hatred that had lain dormant within them for ages. Vidhyut Joshi observes that ". . . these agitations were responsible for the polarization of savarnas and dalits." (Joshi, 80-81) Gujarati Dalit literature in its first phase became synonymous with dalit poetry as it were and the themes that inspired dalit poets to wield their pens were revolt, protest, revenge, resentment and disgust against upper caste oppression and exploitation, unjust and enslaving social customs and traditions, most importantly the appropriation of these by the upper castes. As Kancha Ilaih notes,

> Africans, whose beauty the Dalitbahujan of India share, have taught us that 'black is beautiful', but what we learnt from our own experience is that unless we also say that 'white is ugly', at least till the beauty of all human colours is universally recognized, no white person is going to listen to what we say. Since beauty and ugliness are both culturally constructed notions that gradually transform our consciousness, it is important that these notions be recast to change the hegemonic relations that have

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> been brought into force in the process. Until this painful phase of inequalities has passed, and the consciousness that only the dominating groups are beautiful and others are ugly, the condemned must learn to condemn the others. (Amin, 169)

The implication with reference to the possibility of re-casting the binary notions of 'beauty and ugliness', 'high and low', 'pure and impure' is that there exists a co-relation between the prevalence of hegemonic relations and retaliation by those considered fallen. The dalit writers thus channelized their anger against orthodox prejudices and savagely discriminating religious ideologies of upper caste Hindus. This was combined with a sincere attempt to create a just and humane society by reaching down to the men on the brink and awakening them to their rights, self-respect and human dignity. Among them were Dalpat Chauhan, Govind Parmar, Sahil Parmar. Raju Solanki, Harish Mangalam, Kisan Sosa, Shankar Painter, Jayanti Makwana, Pravin Gadhvi, Mohan Parmar and many others.

The second phase is one that sees a diversification in terms of genres as well as thematic and structural innovation and experimentation. Writers like Joseph Macwan, B. Kesharshivam and other writers named above write literature worthy of attention and acclaim. The literature written in the second phase sets out to explore dalit themes in an artistic and innovative manner in a bid to prove to mainstream writers that they are capable of writing in the 'master's language'. Originality of theme is the hallmark of dalit literature in that they are dalitist. The versatility of writers in this phase is amazing. The interviews of eminent dalit writers viz. Joseph Macwan. Dalpat Chauhan, B. Kesharshivarn,' Mohan Parmar, and Harish Mangalam by Girishkumar Rohit offer useful information on the current powerful status of Gujarati dalit literature. Joseph Macwan is of the firm opinion that commitment is the pre-requisite to being a dalit writer. According to him mainstream literature is based on

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aesthetics whereas dalit literature is expressive of such intense pain that it renders all definitions of aesthetics ineffective. Dalpat Chauhan is resentful of the fact that dalits are marginalized in Gujarati mainstream literature as they are in mainstream society. He is proud of the fact that dalit writers have carved out a path for themselves without resorting to imitation. According to him literature cannot be written by keeping certain rules in mind. Per contra writing paves the way for aesthetic standards. The reason for the invisibility of lower castes in pure literature he attributes to the attempt of upper caste writers to sweep under the carpet evidences of their oppressiveness. It is natural that the exposure of the ugly side of society in dalit literature is not well received. Why he asks, shouldn't the mutual hatred that the savarnas and dalits share surface in literature? Why should the dalits not pay savarnas in their own coin, if not with weapons, at least with words? His most attention catching statement is that most critics are not well informed about the ground reality of the dalit community and rural society. In the face of this, critiques tend to do more harm than good to dalit literature. B. Kesharshivam appears equally critical. He says pain, anger and consciousness converge to give birth to dalit literature. He laments the resistance that dalit literature has had to offer to stiff opposition from mainstream literature. While Mohan Parmar admits the ineffectiveness of Gandhian thought on dalit literature as on lalit literature, Harish Mangalam has no qualms in saying that a dalit literature has no motive, no goal, no direction and no commitment. (Rohit, 370-87).

It can be concluded from the foregoing that dalit literature is all that lalit literature is not and vice versa. There is no denying that the characteristics of the two literatures are in stark contrast to each other, so much so that they seem pitted against each other. The points of contrasts derived from a comparative study of Gujarati lalit literature and Gujarati dalit literature are given below:

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Gujarati lalit literature	*Gujarati dalit literature*
1. Long history	Brief history
2. Art for art's sake	Art for life's sake
3. Written to entertain	Written to mobilize awareness
4. Imaginative / Contrived	Realistic/Chronicled
5. Guided by pleasure principle	Driven by social concern
6. Establishment/Canonical	Anti-establishment/ Oppositional
7. Reinforces notions of caste	Opposes notions of caste
8. Exclusivist	Inclusivist
9. Influenced by Hindu mythology, Sanskrit literature and Western literature	Influenced by Ambedkarite ideology, Jyotiba Phule and Buddhism
10. Idealistic	Radical
11. Imitative / Allusive	Original/Distinct
12. Based on / Judged by aesthetic standards	Based on / Judged by sociological standards
13. Literature for the people	Literature of the people
14. Grew out of devotional literature	Grew out of rebellion against upper castes
15. Written by extremely well-educated, well-placed upper caste writers	Written by not always well-educated, well placed dalit writers
16. Sanskritized / Brahmanical in nature	Dalitist in nature
17. High brow attitude	Aggressive attitude
18. Nijanand - pleasure of the self	Commitment–voice of the community
19. Written out of pleasure	Written in blood, sweat and tears
20. Ignores common man	Glorifies common man
21. Expects sub-ordination	Seeks autonomy
22. Gives importance to worldly matters (materialism)	Gives importance to human values (humanism)
23. Writes as artists	Writers as activists
24. Resists and rejects dalit literature	Shuns the literary hegemony of lalit literature
25. Leisure activity - deals with finer aspects of life	Purposeful activity – deals with the ugly side of life

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The points of contrast listed above are indicative of the fact that Gujarati lalit literature and Gujarati dalit literature are clearly polarized and that dalit literature, to borrow Hephzibah Israel's words, "consciously seeks to express an alternate poetics and politics in an alternate voice to what has long been considered mainstream" literature. (Basu, 114) Divested of these oppositional characteristics, dalit literature ceases to be itself.

Like Black literature and Women's writing, dalit literature is engaged in a search for self-identity. Guided by Ambedkarite ideology, dalit writers use their literature as a movement against mainstream literature that supports inequality. Dalit literature is a mass movement, a cultural revolution against Brahmanic superiority. As exhorted by Babasaheb Ambedkar, Dalit writers strive to cleanse the stated values of life and culture and bring progress in the lives of the ignored classes through their literary creations. It is this endeavour of theirs through dalit literature that leads to a discernment of an identity building process. As Franco points out, experiences, memory and expression are intrinsic components of identity. He explains,

> A sense of a continuous remembered self (our rough and ready definition of identity from a psychological perspective) has both elements, the emotional and social, the inner and outer. To locate identity in the external social world alone where norms and practices reign supreme is to ignore the private world of desire and feeling, a latent self as real as the role-playing, norm-observing one. Both outer social world and inner felt world together make up identity, which in turn is preserved in memory. The external builds and shapes initially, and then is itself subject to modification by choosing, feeling individuals acting from a private sphere. (Franco, 2-3)

Dalit literature is primarily the articulation of the experiences and feelings of an entire community. Gujarati

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dalit writers in giving voice to their struggle (emotional/ inner) against discriminating upper castes (social/ outer) are necessarily giving shape to dalit identity (real self/latent self) which is located in a collective dalit consciousness. And this it does in the face of being severely criticized for dealing exclusively with caste, giving literature a caste identity, of caste discrimination within the community, of the use of a rough hewn and jagged idiom in literature, of showing disregard to hindu religious literature, to name a few. Why do we forget that dalits have and still continue to suffer exploitation and suppression by the social, economical, religious, political domination by upper castes? Why don't the upper castes first do away with caste differences themselves? Why is the coming together of dalit writers on a common platform in 1981 and 1985 not highlighted as much as vankar hegemony in dalit literature is? It is through their literature that dalits struggle to create an awareness that is instrumental in acquiring those very rights that they are deprived of. Like writers of Black literature and women's writing, dalit writers are engaged in a quest for liberation from social slavery, justice in an egalitarian society and equality in other spheres of life. And this they articulate through language, their own language. The dual purpose of the deliberate use of dialects is to create an alternate voice on the one hand, and to be heard as the spokesmen of the community. There may be millions of dalits who may want to articulate themselves, but cannot because of lack of literacy, circumstances, etc. Native dialects are an inherent part of the identity of the dalits and they choose to articulate their story in their own language. One point that has to be clarified here is about the misconception regarding the idiom of Gujarati dalit literature. Dalit writers make use of the dialect only when it comes to conversations and internal monologues. The upper caste characters also speak the dialect of the region in which the novel, etc. is based. In fiction depicting urban, educated, professional dalit characters, the idiom is refined.

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In both cases, the idiom of narration is of the most artistic and literary variety (standard language).

It cannot be denied that dalit literature is resented and denounced for being propagandist, unaesthetic, monotonous and aggressive. These are charges that dalit riders override and concentrate rather on assertion of their identity. Sharankumar Limbale's statement explains the manner in which dalit literature is instrumental in the identity formation and assertion of the dalits.

> Dalit literature seeks to transform savarna society, to bring about change in the heart and mind of the savarna individual. Dalit literature will have two dimensions. One will be to familiarize Dalits with their past, to explain to them that they are enslaved, to show them that they are human beings and it is their duty and their right to fight for the rights of a human being. The other dimension of Dalit literature will involve working on the hearts and minds of savarna society in order to persuade them about the rights and entitlements of Dalits, to make them see that these are human beings and have been suppressed, and convince them that they must change. (Limbale, 125)

It can be said in the light of the above quote that Gujarati dalit writers in the process of identity assertion negotiate at three levels. (1) By dealing mainly with rural locales and incidents of upper caste oppression, they try to awaken the consciousness of dalits at the grass root level. In portraying dalits as victims of upper castes, the attempt is to depict the truth and nothing but the truth. (2) In portraying a dalit character as a rebel against upper caste oppression, the idea is to provide an impetus to the community to rise up against social injustice, to create the 'latent self, referred to earlier. The aim is also to provoke guilt in the upper castes. This is precisely why such depictions do not find favour with upper caste critics. An apt example is Satish Vyas's criticism of Teeho's

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aggressiveness as depicted in Joseph Macwan's *Angaliyat.* Satish Vyas says, "In Joseph Macwan's *Angaliyat,* which is a much discussed novel these days, the heroic depiction of the harijan protagonist Teeho, is not realistic. One doesn't come across such a strong harijan as Teeho in rural society, and if there happens to be one he will not be allowed to survive. This is the tragic reality in the villages." (Vyas, 24) Vyas adds that such depictions border on the idealistic. Then contradicting his own statement he says Joseph Macwan fails to meet artistic standards because of his pre-occupation with concrete reality. (3) By depicting female protagonists in the form of Jogni or Jagdamba and the castration of oppressors, writers resort to subversion of the ultimate power of upper castes and the notion that dalit women are the means they have to humiliate the males of the lower castes. Humbling upper caste oppressors by dalit women in literature is inspired by real life incidents as B. Kesharshivam admits in an interview compiled in a collection of his short stories dealing with female consciousness. As Omprakash Valmiki remarks, "Without dalit consciousness (an essential component of dalit literature) dalit literature becomes superficial and fictitious." (Valmiki, 30)

It can be said by way of summing up this section that like all dalit literature, Gujarati dalit literature is 'socio-cultural specific writing' and leads to democratization of Gujarati literature i.e. decentralization of the literary power of brahmanical literature. The identity formation and assertion process of dalits through literature travels from the writer (individual/community) via experiences and memory through literary expression leading to consciousness and culminates in identity.

III

All that has been said in the above two sections is enough to indicate that the time has come, when it cannot be denied that dalit literature has carved a niche for itself, mainly out of a socio-cultural need. Dalit literature has

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come a long, long way from a stage where it sought acceptance and approval of lalit literature (mainstream). Dalit writers in Gujarat are still divided in opinion on several issues. Some have been lured entirely into the literary camp which privileges the aesthetic over ideology. However, the majority, and it is a clear majority, has resisted all kinds of attempts of being co-opted. These are writers who are fiercely committed to the dalit cause, they are the sentinels of the citadel of dalit literature. They have moved from 'erasure' to 'assertion' by writing a history of their own, so it does not matter any longer if they have not found a place of mention in histories of adalit Gujarati literature.

Gujarati dalit writers have moved from the margin to the centre, from invisibility to visibility, from speechlessness to speech. Having effected a reversal of centrality and marginality, they consider themselves in a position privileged enough now to view the 'other' literature as a dalit (non-dalit). With the bulk of Gujarati dalit literature that is published, read, critiqued and translated, one may infer that it has reached the stage of self-authentication. The fact that it has grown sustainedly stronger over the last three decades is evidence of the impact it wields over readers and critics alike. The message is loud .and clear. Dalit literature is here to stay in Gujarat. The time has come to christen the Anu-Adhunik Yuga (Post-modern Age) in the history of Gujarati literature as the Dalit Yuga (Dalit Age).

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13

Gujarati Dalit Poetry: Origin and Development

— Harish Mangalam

Dalit literature is created in the social context normally and hence it should be evaluated from the sociological point of view. A little needs to be said about the movement of Dalit literature before venturing to locate the factors of its origin. The words 'movement' and 'agitation' have been controversial as far as Dalit literature is concerned. An effort must be made to recognize the resonance of the words 'anger' and 'rebellion' in connection with the welfare of Dalit literature rather than to take them in the literal sense. It would be a futile exercise to look up these words in the best of dictionaries. Human values change with the passage of time. One must gain familiarity with every aspect of the Dalit community to be able to understand Dalit poetry which is written with man-in terms of human values at the centre. This will enable one to differentiate between 'anger' as vexation, neglect, rebuke or slander in its narrowest connotation and 'anger' as the evolving awareness of a community suffering from ages and its abomination of the exploitative class of society. One will also be able to make a distinction between 'agitation' as commotion in the streets and 'agitation' as the shuddering emotions arising in the heart of a Dalit writer. Why is there an upheaval among the Dalits? What are the factors responsible for it? The aim of Dalit literature has been right from its roots to communicate the message through literature with a view

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to initiating social awareness. To put it in the psychological context it simply means the birth of vindictiveness in a person who has been wronged by another (the degree of vindictiveness matches with the degree of wrong doing.) It doubles in measure when it lies uncommunicated; the expression is therefore necessary. It is then that the 'anger' is transformed into a movement from its depth. Agony, anguish and the ereater anguish (untouchability) which converge into an ideology – create cognitive waves which make an unimaginable defeaning sound. The body shivers and perspires profusely and the heart is set aflame. All this occurs in a flash of a moment but the aftermath lasts down the ages.

One remembers vividly the struggle of the national leader, Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar, who spent his entire life for the upliftment of the downtrodden, without paying heed to anything else. Dr. Ambedkar's revolt was one devoid of swords and guns, his was an ideological revolution—an ideological change–this is the aim at the heart of Dalit literature. It is the purpose of awakening an ideological revolution in the Dalit community which makes it a literature not inspired by revolt but rather a literature which is expressive of the anguish and injustice / experienced by the Dalits.

Dr. Baba Saheb Ambedkar's life has been one of overwhelming struggles. He was the originator of novel, progressive and radical thoughts. He was treated like a leper in Vadodara when he was kicked out of an inn. Thus, Ambedkar—the official was metamorphosed into Ambedkar—the fierce struggler. He vowed:

> "If I fail to do away with the abominable thraldom and inhuman injustice under which the class in which I was born has been groaning, I will put an end to my life with a bullet."

A storm swept across his heart and Ambedkar took to the path of his historical revolution which lasted until his death. He started publishing a fortnightly journal called

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'Muknayak', through which he conveyed the pitiable condition of the untouchables to the masses. He established the Hitkarini Sabha in 1920 and approached the Governor of Bombay on its behalf saying:

> "The Whites have inflicted physical torture upon the Negro slaves; they have roasted the Negros alive, but the Savarnas have inflicted mental torture upon the Dalits. Mental pain is more terrible than physical pain."

Dr. Ambedkar preached the truth that Dalit unity was extremely necessary and that the Dalits would have to redeem themselves. He acquired high education and illustrated the importance of education to Dalits; he made a crucial contribution to the spread of awareness in the Dalit community. He made forceful attempts to attack the Brahminic social structure based on the varna system, and announced rebellion against the age-old, unjust customs and traditions laid down in the *Manusmruti.* He voiced the truth blatantly:

> "All Dalits gathered here! How miserable your conditions is! My heart is shattered when I see your sad faces and hear your feeble words. Why do you not resist the pain and anguish that the world offers you? Why didn't you die in your mother's womb as soon as you were born? You will oblige the world by dying even now. The world will be redeemed of the burden of pain and sorrow. But if you really want to live, you must live courageously. You must also have your share of food, shelter and clothes like the rest of the citizens. This is your birthright. You will have to stand up to acquire your human rights. You will have to resolve, unite and fight for your rights."

Thus, the revolt against the biased laws of Manu gave way to a bitter struggle. Dr. Ambedkar was not a mere philosopher, he did not hesitate to make rebellion a weapon

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to combat problems. The Dalits of Gujarat were active in the rebellious movement of Dr. Ambedkar right from 1924. They whole heartedly believed in the motto of the movement that "Independence would be useless if a caste-less society was not created." On 28th April, 1927, Dr. Ambedkar launched a Satyagraha to establish human rights and drank water from the Mahad Chavdar lake. What objection could be taken if the Dalits (part of the Hindu community) drank water from the lake, when Christians, Parsis. Muslims and even animals could drink freely? Dr. Ambedkar was ready to even lay down his life for the abolition of untouchability. He set a copy of the *Manusmruti* on fire on 25th November, 1927. He also initiated a movement to protest against the prohibition of Dalits from entering temples, the movement called 'Nasik Kalaram Mandir Pravesh' was an earnest attempt to free Dalits from servitude. Dr. Ambedkar's political struggle was as powerful as the social one. He resigned from his post as a Labour-minister in favour of Dalit rights. His most revolutionary step was to introduce reservation for Dalits in jobs and politics. His vision was to channelize the benefits of political freedom down to the hutments of the poor. Apart from the welfare of the untouchables, he contributed immensely towards a strong Central Government, the Common Civil Code, the Chinese invasion and the Indian foreign policy, family-welfare, women empowerment, the national language and other national issues. Shivraj has rightly said "The dead Ambedkar is more powerful than the live Ambedkar was." It was Dr. Ambedkar's belief, "It could be your interest to be our master, how could it be ours to be your slaves? Dr. Ambedkar who earned numerous titles, like 'An Architect of the Indian Constitution, 'A Champion of Untouchables', 'A Champion of Humanity', 'The Great Son of India', 'The Great Socialist', 'A Social and Economic Emancipator', was to lead a movement which resulted in a mass-awakening. The prominent painter Dr. Dhananjay Keer has said with reference to the inspiration provided by Dr. Ambedkar, "A new academy of knowledge, a new inspiration for poetry, a

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new place of pilgrimage and a new opportunity for literature have sprung up!"

V. S. Khandekar, a Marathi writer said in 1981 that Dalit literature is the result of twenty years; the philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar's movement is at its root. Dalit youths who were part of the Ambedkarite movement in Marashtra felt that there was no place for the sorrow, sadness and joy of the Dalits, in Marathi literature. Mahatma Jyotiba Phule, whom Ambedkar considered his guru, turned his back towards traditional Marathi literature and brought about a revolution through poetry, fiction and other writings. Annabhan Sathe hailed from the Matang caste and had Communist beliefs. His novels depict the concrete reality in its stark form, and are a mouthpiece of the oppressed class. His poetry—is also coloured by the Ambedkarite movement. However, even at that stage the term 'Dalit literature' had not come into being. An important point to note here is that one finds the roots of the Dalit literary movement in the writings of Baba Saheb Ambedkar. The intellectual contribution of Dr. Ambedkar through important books on social, economic and political subjects can never be forgotten. It is precisely in the letters written to Lieutanant Dada Saheb Gaikwad that the seeds of Dalit literature were sown. During that time, short-stories and novels in a new literary form were published in 'Prabuddha Bharat' and 'Dharmayana'. Revolutionary ideas were woven into this literature, of which V. S. Kardak, Raja Dhale and Bandhu Madhav were leading writers. It is a natural rule that new challenges are always resisted by tradition and canonical writers were not prepared to accommodate this new current of literature into their own. In 1960, the whole of Maharashtra was startled by the fire-spitting poetry and stories written by hundreds of Dalit youths. Shri Gangadhar Pantawane's quarterly *Asmitadarsh* is a landmark of Marathi Dalit literature. 'Dhammakiya' published from Nagpur also made its mark, by proclaiming the philosophy of Dr. Ambedkar. Dalit writers were greatly

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encouraged by journals like 'Sinhgarjana', 'Jayabhim' and 'Prajasataak'. Many elegiac poems were written on Dr. Ambedkar's death in 1956, though the term Dalit was still not in use. Dalit literature was yet to be defined. Dr. M. N. Vankhede, Prof. Gangadhar Pantawane, Keshav Meshram, Raja Dhale, Prof. M. B. Chitnis were later joined by Daya Pawar, Baburao Bagul and Rao Saheb Kasbe in their effort to define Dalit literature. The harvest of their tilling is so plentiful that today no literary programme held in Maharashtra can be concluded without the mention of Dalit literature.

The definition of Dalit literature consists mainly of the 'rejection' of superstitions, the varna system, inhumanity and unjust exploitation; a strong 'protest' against all factors in the way of human welfare, as well as 'revolt' against the caste and class based social structure. It was with this definition at the centre that Marathi Dalit writers wrote in profusion and reached out to readers both, within and outside the nation. The notable collections of Marathi Dalit poetry are *Golpitha* (Namdev Dhasal), *Kodwada* (Daya Pawar), *Uthan Gufa* (Yashwant Manohar), *Gaun Kuvabaharni Kavita* (Waman Nimbalka), *Utkhanan* (Keshav Meshram), *Dastakhat* (Prakash Jadhav), *'Chavni Havte Auh* (Arjun Dangle), *Nakebatidhi* (J. V. Pawar), *Surang* (Trayambak Amkale), *Fariyad* (Hira Bhansode), *Amran che Shahar* (Aran Kale), etc. There is an indirect influence of Marathi Dalit literature on Gujarati Dalit literature; however the anti-reservation agitation was to shake the Dalits from the roots, and a torrent of Dalit literature began to flow. Dalit literature began to appear in journals like 'Panther', 'Aakrosh', 'Garud', 'Kalo Suraj', 'Dalit-bandhu', 'Ajampo', 'Muktinayak', 'Disha', 'Dalit-mukti', 'Dalit-mitra', 'Abhyudaya', 'Nayamarga', 'Tamanna', 'Pragatijyoti', 'Taras', 'Avsar', 'Akshay' and 'Hayati'. Gujarat Dalit literature was to open its account with poetry. Now of course, a lot of prose is being written. The prose has proved aesthetically superior than the poetry. The credit for editing the'first anthology of Gujarati Dalit

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poetry goes to Prof. Ganpat Parmar and Manishi Jani; it was in 1981 that the anthology *Dalit Kavita* was published. The air was filled with the gushing flow and unique expression of the new current. The widespread evils in the Hindu social structure were targeted. The anthology contains poems of poets like Dalpat Chauhan, Karshandas Luhar, Trilok Rewar, Kisan Sosa, Dan Vaghela, Nirav Patel, Mansukh Vaghela, Pravin Gadhvi, Maun Baloli, Muhammad Ishak Shaikh, Mangal Rathod, Sahil Parmar, Yoseph Macwan and Harish Mangalam et. al. One notices that the compilation of *Dalit Kavita* has been very liberal. It would have been wise not to include the certain weak poems that it has. Nevertheless, the anthology has been the first sun-ray and has warmed readers, for which the editors need to be congratulated. Not only was the anthology enthusiastically received but also critically appreciated by numerous poets; who further acquainted readers with the anthology through their writings. If a great avenue opened up for the expansion of Dalit literature and its realism on the one hand, it met with stiff opposition on the other hand. Shirish Panchal replied pungently:

> If sub-standard works pass off as the best on account of caste, power and position, there should be no hesitation in accepting those works in Dalit literature which are worthy and satisfactory. At least there is the truthfulness of experience and honesty of expression; its literary skill will flourish with time. The variety and the strength of American literature is attributed to its writers who come from all stratas of society unlike Indian writers who belong to one particular class of society. Similarly when our literature shall be created by a wide section of society, it shall become powerful. Literature will cease to be a rift between various classes of society."

Soon the poems in *Dalit Kavita* began to make their powerful presence felt:

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Pining from the
last thousand years
is our thirst for knowledge.
Followed blindly we have
the scoundrel Manu.

—Sahil Parmar

The poet abuses those unjust upholders of society who have deprived him of word-knowledge; but the abuse soon melts away. Who, if not the poet, shall raise his voice against injustice?

Poetry is a fitting medium for Yoseph Macwan's sarcasm. His poems centring on existenlialism cannot escape the reader's attention:

My nation is paralyzed by power
Every morning as I pick up
The newspaper to read the headlines
Images of Mohenjo Daro and
Harappa spin in
the kaelidoscope of Time.

–Yoseph Macwan

Dalpat Chauhan who has been actively participating in the movement from the beginning, writes bitingly on the subject of untouchability. The following lines are an illustration:

With shivering hands I wrote
not the numeral one on the slate;
but on my pulsating chest
like the burning sands of deserts
I engraved my caste.
The time has come to give up the habit
of wearing a soiled half-pant
and wiping the nose with
a torn shirt-sleeve.

–Dalpat Chauhan

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In the poem 'Gaay Mari Gai, Baay Mari Gai', Himmat Khatsurya exposes the hypocrisy of the Hindu religion. If a buffalo gives birth to a he-calf, it is prevented from drinking milk till it dies, but if a she-calf is born, they nurture it with care-out of sheer greed!! When a cow dies, Ramdhuns are sung, people come swarming, the final rites are excercised with the spraying of powdered colour. But when a poor woman labourer dies, she goes unnoticed, as if she were a dead fly. This implies that the status of Dalits in this country is worse than that of animals. By juxtaposing the deaths of the cow and the woman, the poet has inflicted heavy blows on society. The hypocrisy is revealed through contradiction.

Harish Mangalam in his poem 'Replace Thashe?' urges us to look back at our terrible past. Its frightening form makes our heads swim. The poem is a rebuke to the Dalits who live a dying life in the face of the monstrous shape assumed by the evils of society, The poet questions them, 'Is our blood frozen?' 'When will it be replaced?', 'Will it ever boil?' The corpse of the freezing process is stinking and needs to be buried hastily. The feeling of joint families and of the world as a family has been lost long ago. The poet's secret fear is that the very bugle-blowers may be caught unawares. Thus, the poet brings the poem to an uncertain close with the question:

> But
> Will our blood ever be replaced ???
> or, from centuries...

–Harish Mangalam

Dalits have been mute sufferers of injustice and exploitation, from time eternal. No attempts of erasing the scourges of society have been entirely fruitful. Mahatmas have come and gone but there has been no dazzling revolution in the deplorable plight of the Dalits. Will anybody be able to fling away the corpse of untouchability? Will someone be able to quench the centuries—old thirst of Dalit hopes and aspirations?

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Hope is obsolete!
Thirst is obsolete!
Who will carry?
The corpse is obsolete !

–Dan Vaghela

The edition has promoted many good poems; it is unique in its selection of poems which are representative of the oeuvre of the respective poets. Poets who have stood the test of time have been represented in this anthology, viz. Kisan Sosa, Karshandas Luhar, Trilok Rewar, Nirav Patel, Pravin Gadhvi, Mansukh Vaghela, Muhammad Ishak Shaikh, Maun Baloli, Ramchandra Patel, et. al. Mohan Parmar, an eminent writer has remarked with regards to this anthology, "It is not the poet's function to depict the illusory reflections of the world in a realistic manner." The following lines by Harish Mangalam are remarkable for the removal of such illusory reflections as spoken above; as for its aesthetic impact:

Look! How fiercely the sky-border bums
The blood-dripping horizon clings to the heart
The bird nestling in the eye aims the sight...
A wing intertwined with several wings...

–Harish Mangalam

Most often, reflections are often mundane and gross in nature and rob the poetry of its finer elements; as in the lines below:

Dalpat, there's nobody whom I can call mine
Since I breathe, I am helpless
A string I am of a broken life.

–Dalpat Chauhan

Thus, Dalit poetry is not merely a medium for the expression of rebellion. It's aim is to pierce through the several worldly screens and give birth to a truth which is different and new."

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I fully agree with Mohan Parmar. Poetry along with powerful expression must also bring the truth to light. *Visfot* (1984) edited by Balkrishna Anand and Chandu Maheria, *Asmita* (1984) edited by Chandu Maheria and *Eklavya no Angutho* (1987) edited by Nilesh Kathad are some of the collections of poetry which followed the first. Looking through these collections one discerns the graph of Dalit poetry. The number of loud and verbose poems seems to diminish in these anthologies. One gets the satisfaction of obtaining clean water after some effort. In its initial stage, Dalit poetry was as if in a mood to create pandemonium. The poetry displayed an impulse to revolt openly, to rebel publicly and indulge in unnecessary abusive language. It was as if the poets having failed at achieving anything, took pride in at least expressing themselves. What would such empty efforts bring? Thankfully, the impulse was not to last long. The journey of Dalit poetry from such a stage to one of being intensely concerned about poetic values in an interesting one.

Further and deeper explorations of the poetic form led to the publication of several independent collections of poetry. (Most important among these are listed in the introduction.) There are quite a few poets who have not been able to publish their poems independently. However, their poems are thought-provoking and have been appearing frequently in journals. Non-Dalit poets also write Dalit poetry. They are Bipin Meshia, Maun Baloli, Saroop Dhruv, Philip Clarke, Himmat Khatsuriya, Krishna Dave, et. al. I undertake below a brief survey of the individual collections of poetry.

The poem 'Chyam lya atlu fati jyu se ?' by Shankar Painter from his collection *Bungiyo Vage* (1984) is a 'geet' (song) written in the folk-dialect of Mehsana. Shankar Painter, a singer himself succeeds in making the desired impact in his deep voice, of making the audience swing to the tune. The verse is remarkable for its expression of unrest and irony in a uniquely subtle manner.

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The reader is swept away in the forceful flow of most of the poems in *Vyatha Pachhisi* (1984) by Sahil Parmar. The poems laden with deep pain also serve as blows on the Hindu social system. A glimpse into the truth that the poems present makes the reader tremble. His use of myth for the transmutation of truth into poetry is superb. 'Pathikruto nu Sonnet' is expressive of firm and progressive beliefs. 'Rotla ni mandai mokan' reveals the timidity of the poor. 'Sambhog' is the plea of Dalits for their rights, whereas 'Shambhuda ni mavdi' goes right through the varna system. But the poet's most sinewy articulation is the poem 'Tanwa mat nai avana'; it is the poet's timely advice for denouncing publicly the duty imposed on Dalits of disposing dead cattle. Seemingly rash in its idiom, the poem is effective in criticizing biased customs. The rhythm of

> No more of disposing carcasses
> Go, dig out the mango-groves.
> Split as many as you can
> Crush as many as you can
> Heads, limbs and whiskers
> But we won't come.

To Pachhi (1983) is Dalpat Chauhan's collection of poems; the poems strive to establish Dalit identity. The poet's commitment is exhibited through his verse particularly the restraint which he exercises in the expression of the Dalit community as suffering from a fatal malady. Time–the time of the formulation of the codes by the upper classes, stands as a metaphor for the untouchables eking out an existence full of neglect and drudgery:

> And we are the Time
> shoved around in
> the name of fate
> shaped by them
> in their rules of conduct.

The poet successfully strikes a balance between realism and poetic quality.

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Atyacharo Tliava Do (1984) and *Batti na Ajwale* by Babaldas Chawda contains poems which are loud. The poet fails to weave reality into poetry, so that the poems tend to become unpoetic. Madhukant Kalpit in his analysis of these poems remarks

> The separate strands of the problems, the restlessness and the struggles try to be interwoven into poetry. But poetry as if a beautiful maiden upset by the violent handling of content resentfully stands aloof.

Most of the poems in *Mashal* (1987) by Raju Solanki, are written in blank verse. The poems, which are alarm signals to the Dalit community, testify to the poet's truthful stand. The moral of the poems is that a community which conceals its weaknesses can never progress. Processions and rallies taken out to mark the birth anniversary of Dr. Ambedkar, rather than digesting and implementing his ideology, reduces the community to indulge in hollow idol worship. This is illustrated effectively in the poem "Bolo Baba Saheb ni Jai. The poem which is a caricature of the Dalit is an attempt to preach the right by means of the opposite,

> New Ramdhuns, new community
> hollow and shallow priests
> Bolo B—ba Saheb ni jai
> Ambedkar they have locked in books
> Processions, rallies, functions
> assemblages of dwarfs,

'Be Page Chalvu Ej Moti Vat Hati' voices the pain of the silent suffering of a community which has been subject to merciless enslavement which is like the sharp claws of a wild animal. The sadness of the poem is moving:

> Exploitation, injustice, oppression
> who cared what they meant?
> To be able to walk on two feet
> was the biggest consolation

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The period between 1955 and 1960 in Europe saw the rise of a group of aggressive writers and poets known as 'Beat-writers', who wrote vehemently against politics, established cultural and moral values, and rationalism. It is through *Mashal* that Raju Solanki assumes the mantle of a 'Beat-writer' and it may not be out of place to use Arnold's statement "Poetry is the reality, the philosophy illusion" to place the poetry of Raju Solanki in the right perspective.

Even today, the ills prevailing in our social system form a vicious circle. Have we been just enough to give half the share of the harvest to the man on the fringe–the one who tills the land with his sweat? This is the poignant query raised by Pravin Gadhvi in his collections *Bavonet* (1985) and *Padchhavo* (1996)

> O father Vasudev, O mother Devki
> I have realized my mistake
> I divided men into four varnas
> But then I was brahmin-kshatriya
> I had shut my ear's to the woman's shrieks
> Little did I know I would be born of her
> Now, I hear, the mills shrieking.

The above lines are from Pravin Gadhvi's poem 'Asprushya Devta, Asprushya Krishna.' The woman in the poem is Kohya Bhangi's wife and by making Krishna be born to her in a consecuiive birth, the poet seems to have worked wonders with his imagination. The kshatriya Krishna and the untouchable Krishna are the two poles on which the poem rests; the truth becomes the axis. *Padchhayo* is noteworthy for its Gandhi poems (Gandhi Kavyo):

> What a miserable state is Gandhi in!
> He lies scattered in the Capital-square
> like his baggage flung on
> the railway station at Meritzburg.

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In *Sat Re Bolo Nahitar Mat Bolo* (1999) Kantilal Makwana puts India under a microscope, and reports on the political, social and economic state of affairs, sometimes sarcastically, at other times starkly:

> Dreaming of captainship
> and vice-captainship
> in the national match;
> At the fortieth year
> of Independence
> we stand outside the boundary
> like the twelfth player of the team.

and also in the following lines:

> How long have we to keep hanging?
> Will we get a seat after fifty years; of freedom?

Blank verse is most suitable, it has proved, for Dalit poetry. One finds 'gazals' in Nilesh Kathad's *Agnikan* (1999). The poet is interested in deriving definitions of man:

> Come let us define man
> according to time

In 'Desh ni Tasvir Khenchi Le, Desh ne Foto Hashe Manas', the poet advices the man on the other side, who is in the form of a wild beast, to give up his animal nature:

> Replace your hands if you can
> Blood won't stop flowing here.

Shamat Parmar in *Jwalamukhi* (1999) has written man-centered poems. His focus is on the depiction of the individual in a divided society:

> Temple bells ringing dull
> No charm in the muezzin's call.

as also in these lines:

> Don't you claim to be man
> Stones in every hand, not Gita or Koran.

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Maheshchandra Pandya's first collection of poetry titled *Manas Pan Karde Chhe* (1999) echoes Shamat Parmar's themes. The poet tries to describe 'man' who is at the centre of his poems. What kind of man? The following poem answers the question:

> Man fragmented on T.V.
>
> Man relayed on radio
>
> Man lost in wilderness
>
> In the quarrel of the sun and moon
>
> Man bites thoughtfully!
>
> Man bites knowingly!
>
> Man bites Eklavya!
>
> Man bites Shambook too?

The poet seems to have lost faidi in mankind.

Dalit community; the title poem is a threnody depicting the painful struggle of Dalits for human existence. Another poem by the poet voices the expectations that he has from Dalits to germinate like Ambedkar:

> Dalits like crushed sugarcane
>
> dumped on the garbage hill
>
> outside the village
>
> are being recycled as manure.
>
> No Shambook ready to offer his head,
>
> No Eklavya ready to offer his thumb,
>
> Shall germinate.
>
> But several Ambedkars in revolt.

In *Prakamp* (1994), Harish Mangalam has written Dalit as well as non-Dalit poems. Shri Ushanas, the famous Gujarati poet-critic has in his article 'Prakamp na samvedan kampano: ek gatividhi graph' has said:

> "The title of the collection adds to the intensity of an earthquake, connoting much more power-packed meaning:

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States of being hurled
by a terrible storm
I have been sitting on
the broken cot and waiting.

The mood of Dalit literature today is not like the gentle breeze of spring, but a mid-summer cyclone. The poems belong to a battle field; one where there is a battle for the social justice of Dalits. Literature at revolutionary stages in society is always unrestful. Harish Mangalam's main cry is 'Give us our rights!' There are as diverse images as a desert, a valley, an owl, foxes, sleepiness, cancer, etc., in the poems. But the image of the sun is the most frequently used. The sun-image in Dalit poems is significant for two reasons: (1) It is a symbol of a new morning, (2) The Sun is the father of Karna in the *Mahàbharata*. Harish Mangalam is truly the modern voice in Gujarati Dalit literature."

The feeling of commitment in the Dalit poetry written from the last two and a half decades is obvious. Dalit poetry aims at social upliftment; the poetry is coloured by the 'racial theme'. The poetry displays the involvement of the personal with social realities. An historical approach therefore becomes essential when an attempt is made at understanding the poetry. Not only does one have to be familiar with the reality of the community, but also needs to adopt the bio-critical approach of taking into account the economic, cultural and social circumstances that the poets live in. The decadent Hindu social system will have to be remedied. The will of the Dalit poets to conquer. Time is becoming stronger than ever now, as Arvind Vegda clears his throat to say:

Varnashrama- the stubborn colt
neighing like a wild horse
Burn the name with a glance

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They are human.
We are not.
For we have not learnt
to row through the air
with the corpse of our shadow
dangling from our shoulders.

Religion is meant for the welfare of men; but religion is turned upside down and made to stand on its head so that it ceases to be religion. What do men gain by shouting 'Jai Ranchhod, Makhan Chor'? True religion is tolerant and aims at brotherhood. Fanaticism must be got rid of to ensure a peaceful co-existence. This is displayed in Mohan Parmar's poem 'Rathyatra' which is included in this anthology.

Gujarati Dalit poetry which opened on a note of revolt, anger and impulse, went on to steady itself like water in a well. In the present scenario we notice that Gujarati Dalit poetry can boast of a tremendous freshness of expression coupled with originality of depiction. Nothing can stop its progress towards enlightenment.

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14

Gujarati Dalit Literature: An Overview

— Dushyant Nimavat

Literature can not be detached from life. It is the expression of life. Mathew Arnold calls literature (poetry) the criticism of life. Life with all its shades becomes the raw material of literature. The Dalit Literature is the product of modern age as the Black literature sprang in the USA during the 20th century as a voice of protest against racial discrimination. The Dalit literature is the reflection of sorrows and protests of the downtrodden and outcaste. Mahatma Gandhi called the Untouchable 'Harijans'. He tried to remove untouchability and called it a blot on Hinduism. However, the Dalits had suffered immensely for many centuries. Even during 1981 and 1985 the Dalits became the victim of casteism and communal frenzy. As a result, the Dalits in Gujarat became united. They found that Dr. Ambedkar's message was more relevant for their upliftment. Dr. Ambedkar had exhorted them to be educated, to be united and to struggle.

Dr. Ambedkar passionately struggled to lift up untouchables to a status equal to other higher castes of India. He used various tactics. He encouraged attempts to join religious festivals, to enter temples and to perform marriages through Vedic rites. Later he converted himself into a Buddhist with millions of other Dalits. In political field, he supported special representation for the Depressed

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classes. Dr. Ambedkar's guiding principles can be summarized as follows:

(1) The untouchable should revolt against their enslavement. There is no racial difference that marks them off from other Hindus. If Hindu scriptures ordain untouchability, these scriptures should be rejected outright.

(2) Only by acknowledging their slavery, they can unify and press for change. Only by their acknowledgement of slavery to the Government, they can force the Government to make correction of that injustice and pass laws to provide them equality.

(3) As only the Untouchables can understand the condition of the Untouchables, the movement of the Untouchables must be headed by the Untouchable leaders only.

(4) Education and politics are the chief means of equality. Education will provide them equal participation in society and politics will help them in securing their rights.

(5) Untouchables are totally Indian. No foreign ideology or foreign religion can help them to achieve equality as Indians. India must be free before they are totally free but their battle for freedom must never be subservient to other demands.

(6) The Untouchables should become elites so that others can follow them. They should be made aware of their potential.

Though the philosophy of Indian scriptures is unparalleled, it is unfortunate that Brahamanical interpretations of the scriptures made perverted attempts to create abominable hierarchies among human beings. In fact, there is nothing greater than human being themselves. Manu, the codifier of Hinduism in his book 'Manu Smriti'

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wrote that if the holy words of the Vedas are heard by the low caste people, lava hot lead should be poured in their ears. Thus the Dalits were segregated from mainstream. They were ostracized. The Hindus forgot that their great saints and philosophers belonged to low caste's men as Valmiki, Ved Vyas, Sauni, Rom Harshan, Tiru Vallur, Kabir, Raidas, Chokhamela, Namdev, Tukaram, Jyotirao Fule etc.

The word Dalit means broken reduced to pieces, ground or crushed and therefore depressed. No other word is as appropriate as the Dalit, The other words like Untouchable, Scheduled Caste, Depressed class and Harijans do not carry the same inherent depth as the word 'Dalit'.

In modern time, religious, social, economic and political upheavals caused people to think beyond their narrow domestic walls. They got inspiration from great thinkers and poets like Kabir, Marx, Lincoln, Martin Luther, Tolstoy etc. Indian Renaissance was inspired by the great social reformers like Raja Ram Mohan Roy. Bankimchandra Chatterjee etc. Swami Vivekananda, Jyotiba Phule and Gandhiji exhorted human values and placed man in the centre. In other parts of the world, similar revolution took place. In the USA and Africa, Black literature voiced strong reaction against exploitation and subordination of the Blacks by the Whites. In India, Progressive Literature raised its voice against any kind of oppression, be it colonial or racial. Gorky in Russia, Lu shun in China and Premchand in India created literature that presented the sufferings of the suppressed and the downtrodden. Mulk Raj Anand published his famous novel 'The Untouchable' in 1935. Sivashankar Pillai's 'Scavenger's Sons' presented the plights of the scavengers. Sane Guruji, a Brahmin Gandhian reformer, wrote a highly influential book 'Shymchi Ai' (Shyam's mother) in 1935. Well-known poets and writers in Marathi Dalit Literature are P.K. Atre, Kusumagraj, D.K. Bedekar, Durga Bhagwat, Vijay Tendulkar, Dilip Chitre, Balchandra Nemade and Jayavant Dalvi. Namdeo Dhasal and Baburao Bagul depicted bleak eighty words of the Dalits.

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Daya Pawar's following poem is very poignant.

> "In the stores here, in hotels, about the streets,
>
> Indians and cars are measured with the same yard-stick:
>
> 'Niggers' 'Blacks'! This is the abuse they fling me.
>
> And deep in my heart a thousand scorpions sting me."
>
> Reading all this, I felt so damn good!
>
> Now you've had the taste of what we've suffered
>
> In this country from generation to generation.
>
> (Dayapawar in Kondwada (cattle pen) translated by Graham Smith)

The Dalit Poetry in Gujarati

The Dalit Literature in Gujarat began with poetry. In the poetry of Kabir, Ravidas and Narsinh Mehta, the voice of the oppressed has been heard in one or the other way. Gandhiji's influence also inspired poets to write about the sufferings of the poor and the downtrodden. In Gujarati literature, the Dalit poetry came from non-Dalit poets first. In the poetry of Karsandas Manek, Shridharani, Sundaram and Umashankar Joshi the voice of protest against exploitation is heard here and there. Umashankar Joshi in one of his poems tells the wealthy people to build palatial houses but not forget.

> "The fire of the stomachs of the hungry
>
> will be a flame
>
> the speck of the ash of remains will not
>
> be found."
>
> (Gangotri, p. 30).

The true Dalit voice comes from the Dalit poets only. The issue of a magazine by the Dalit Panthers called

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'Aakrosh' in 1978 carried poignant poems from some Dalit poets. Dalpat Chauhan says,

> "I will be born again and again in this land
> and burn the sky with my fire."

Nirav Patel writes,

> "What are our sins?
>
> What crimes?
>
> What mistakes?
>
> We cleaned your streets, is it our mistake?
>
> We carried the carcasses of your dead animals, is it our mistake?
>
> We covered the naked with clothes, is it our mistake?
>
> We toiled for you - is it our mistake?"

Pravin Gadhavi cautions the elites:

> "Keep away, don't touch us, we're untouchables,
>
> If you touch us, we are burning light of the midday sun."

In 1981, Ganpat Parmar and Manishi Jani edited a collection of poems 'Dalit Poetry'. The collection contains some very appealing poems. Karsandas Luhar says,

> "There's no torch in my hand,
>
> My hand itself is a torch."

In 1984, two collection of Dalit poetry came out — 'Asmita' edited by Chandu Maheria and 'Visphot' by Chandu Maheria and Balkrishna Anand. Chandu writes:

> "I don't want to be a poet,
>
> I want to be nothing but a rebel."

Dalpat Chauhan voices the agonies of the Dalits.

He says,

> "You talk of wounds
>
> I live on wounds."

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Sahil Parmar attacks the uppercastes who exploit the Dalits in the name of their saviours.

> "These people are not human beings,
>
> They are the bulls that
>
> graze on green grass pretending to be guardians.'

The poet Pravin Gadhavi who is senior bureaucrat in Gujarat is a strong voice of the Dalits.

He writes:

> "O wood cutter
>
> Cut my shadow
>
> I changed name,
>
> I changed my work
>
> I changed my address
>
> I changed myself
>
> But my shadow does not leave me,
>
> The broken cup of tea
>
> is placed on the roof
>
> that gets washed
>
> again the next
>
> morning."

Shivaji Rukhda wrote gazals in Gujarati under the penname 'Dard'.

> "Margins on both sides obstruct where should write the long this story?"
>
> "Lamp burns on the back of a turtle But the turtle in engulfed in darkness."

Harjivan Dafda challenges the advocates of caste system.

> "Before you hate, make sure blood that flows in my veins is also red."

Shyam Sadhu says:

> "Wet clothes can be dried,
>
> How can we shed this pain?"

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Harish Mangalam, Nirav Patel, Raman Vaghela, Arvind Vegada, Shivji Rukhda, Harjivan Dafda, Cahndu Maheria, Manish Parmar, Balkrishna Ariand, Bhikhu Vegda, Pathik Parmar, Madhukant Kalpit, Dan Vaghela, Varij Luhar, B.M. Vankar are promising Dalit poets.

The Dalit Short Stories

Gujarati literature has made a remarkable progress in short stories. First short stories with Dalit themes came from non-Dalit writers like Zhaverchand Meghani. Dwiref, Ishwar Petalikar, Dilip Ranpura, Vijay Shashtri, Bansikumar Barot etc. Petalikar's stories often focus on the sufferings of the helpless and the outcastes.

Joseph Macwan always writes with a missionary zeal. Though his major contribution is his novel 'Angaliat', his short stories are also remarkable examples of literature of commitment to life and human problems. In 1987, Mohan Parmar and Harish Mangalam edited a collection of short stories 'Gujarati Dalit Short Stories'. 'Nakalank', 'Badlo', 'Vilopan', 'Dayan', 'Kumbhi', 'Vethia' etc are hughly artistic short stories with Dalit themes. Pravin Gadhavi, Harish Mangalam, Yashvant Vaghela, Pathik Parmar, Arvind Vegada, Raman Vaghela, Maulik Borija, Anil Vaghela, K.K. Vaishnav, Dinesh Hadial, Raman Davsmani, Swapnil Mehta, Dr. Silas Patelia, Vashram Dutta are promising Gujarati short story writers.

The Dalit Novels

During the last country, in Gujarati literature, the novels dominated all other genres of literature in Gujarati. However, the Dalit novels are just in infancy. Non-Dalit writers gave voice to the sufferings of the oppressed and the downtrodden in their works. In 1862, Sorabsha Munsaf wrote a novel titled 'Hindustan Madhye Nu Ek Zunpadu'. It is a translated work but it contains many characteristics of the Dalit novel. Sopan's 'Prayaschit', Gunvantrai Acharya's 'Kalpavruksha' Ramchandra Patel's 'Varal', Vhinu Modi's 'Kalo Angrez' and Kishorsinh Solanki's 'Masari' focus on the

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themes of the oppressed people in one or the other way. The Dalit writer Joseph Macwan's 'Angaliyat' (1986) is a milestone in the Dalit novel in Gujarati. It depicts the Dalit environment, the Dalit themes and the Dalit sensibilities very effectively and poignantly. 'Angaliyat' was awarded the Indian Academy Award. It has been hailed as the fourth wave by Dhaval Mehta. It is the story of the weavers of Kheda district of Gujarat. The characters are straight-backed Dalits who suffer but do not yield. They prove the dictum "man can be destroyed but not defeated" (Hemmingway 'Old Man and the Son'.) The author has the first hand experience of the lives of the Dalits and their sensibilities. The novel certainly reaches the pinnacle of art and creativity.

Dalpat Chauhan novel 'Malak' presents the relationships of the Dalit with other castes. Due to tyranny of the upper class people, the Dalits have to leave their homes, but they do not lose hope saying "The world is big enough". His another novel 'Gidh' (vulture) is a story of dark corner of human life. Harish Mangalam's novel 'Tirad' and 'Choki' are short novels. 'Tirad' depicts the exploitation of a Dalit woman and 'Choki' focuses on the rural life of the Dalit in Gujarat. Mohan Paramar's novel 'Neliya' has a new theme. It is the story of amnesia and regaining memory of pain and sufferings. B. Kesharshiram's 'Shool' focuses on the cruel and heartless attitude of the upperclass people towards the Dalits. The Dalit fiction has a bright future and one can expect stronger voices representing the Dalit sufferings in years to come.

Other Forms of the Dalit Literature

Drama can be a very powerful means for expression of protest against exploitation of the Dalits but very few attempts have been made in this area. Vast area of the Dalit drama remains unexplored. However, there are few notable examples like Raju Solanki's 'Brahmvad's Barakhadi', Dalpat Chauhan's 'Hun Manas' 'Anayavrat' 'Antim Dhyeya' 'Antim Charan' 'Ati Gyan' 'Angaraj' etc. Joseph Macwan has

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drawn fine pen-pictures of Dalit life. His works 'Vyatha Na Vitak', 'Vahal Na Valakha' 'Mari Bhilla' 'Janam Jala' are full of touching pictures of men and women who suffer unflinchingly. Dr. P.G. Jyotikar has written a biography of Dr. Ambedkar, probably the only authentic work in Gujarati on Dr. Ambedkar's life and philosophy. Criticism too has remained vastly unexplored area. However Non-Dalit writers have written critiques of the Dalit literature. Harish Mangalam has written a critical work 'Vidit' on the Dalit literature and Mohan Parmar has contributed to the Dalit criticism through his work 'Samviti'. B.M. Vankar has written three volumes of the Dalit criticism 'Pratyayan' 'Anusandhan' and 'Navonmesh'.

The Dalit Periodicals

Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar published 'Mook Nayak' in 1920 from Mumbai. In Gujarat, the first Dalit periodical 'NAVYUVAK' was published in 1930. In 1931, 'Dalit Unnati' was published. Then in 1939, 'Dalit Gujarat' came out. In 1953, 'Tankar' was published. These periodicals certainly provided great inspiration to the Dalit writers and brought about awakening regarding their rights. During the last few years, magazines and periodicals like 'Artnad', 'Aakrosh,' 'Garud', 'Kalo Suraj', 'Ajanpo', 'Dinbandhu' 'Dalit Mitra,' ,'Dalit Bandhu', 'Naya Marga', 'Disha', 'Hayati' have been succeeded in igniting the minds of the Dalits in Gujarat. The Dalits have realized that their emancipation from sufferings ultimately lies in education. A recent article in 'The Times of India' says that now the Dalits want to learn English more which they feel will have the way for equality and freedom from age-old discrimination and sufferings.

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History and Recurring Themes of Short Story in Gujarati Dalit Literature

—*Ami U Upadhyay*

This article provides glimpses of the historical circumstances that produced Gujarati dalit literature and locates the short story within that tradition. Drawing on dalit sociology, I want to highlight inequalities and distinction of representation as they interweave with literary narratives.

The eminent Gujarati dalit poet, Nirav Patel sums up a discussion on novels of Gujarati dalit novelists by stating:

> "The dalit experience portrayed in the novels can hardly be considered as complete. It is at best fragments of total reality. Most of the novelists incidentally belong to one gender that is male and come from the predominant vankar caste which is at the top of the dalit pyramid and more backward castes like chamar and bhangi and many others are yet to articulate. One shade can not create rainbows, let hundred flowers bloom to bring the spring."

Patel's observation is about five novelists but it seems a general observation and points out gaps in the expression and representation of dalit experiences. However, the very idea of authenticity is full of contradictions. According to

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Chandraben Shrimali, a dalit and a former member of the Gujarat legislative assembly, 'the parameters of authenticity are the possession of male dalit writers'. She considers untouchability as a small curse of a larger, feeble social system and focuses upon discrimination on grounds of gender rather than caste. It is important to note here that Chandraben belongs to a relatively upper caste among the dalits and to that extent her account of the dalit problem may not be same as a woman from the lowest rung of the dalit ladder' the bhangis. These instances point to the crevice among the dalit writers regarding identity, representation and authenticity.

This brief introduction indicates that it is essential to maintain, some degree of apprehension and provisionality in any consideration of dalit literature. Any assessment of dalit literature would have to take into account a complex web of social, political and economic contexts. Now I would like to give an outline of historical circumstances that produced Gujarati dalit literature locating the short story within that tradition.

Birth and Development of Dalit Literature

Unlike Marathi, Gujarati dalit literature had a fairly delayed beginning.Gujarati dalit writing did not evolve out of a larger political movement against the upper caste like Marathi literature. As a matter of fact, it grew as a response to the upper castes' strong attacks on the reservation policy in 1981. In the year of 1981, anti-reservation agitation created an environment of aggression and animosity between upper caste Gujaratis and dalits. The same environment was also helpful in producing a dalit literary movement, which was up to then scattered and disordered. In the early years, dalit emotional response expressed itself largely through poetry of anguish and pain. Once the periodic efforts found focus and organisation in the 1980s, the number of journals increased at a time and the dalit consciousness sharpened presenting this time not just anguish, but also anger and protest against the upper castes. The 1990s witnessed a

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steady flow of short stories, poems, and to a lesser extent, novels. There was also a rise in vibrant debates about the aesthetic and ideological concern of Gujarati dalit literature at large. At the same time, sociological and research studies on the dalits also increased and they contributed to the development of a dalit discourse in Gujarat.

Historically speaking, the first anthology of Gujarati dalit short story made its appearance with Gujarati Dalit Varta (1987) edited by Mohan Parmar and Harish Mangalam. They emphasized that historical dalitness or 'dalitness' by birth was a mark of major dalit literature and dalit writing should essentially contain a dalit backdrop, dialects, traditions and the history of injustice. The introduction to the book has ever since served like a manifesto of dalit short story. In the years that followed, short stories by dalits became quite frequent in journals such as 'Samajmitra', 'Hayati' and 'Sarvanam'. In the beginning years of 90s, Dalit Sabha and Dalit Sahitya Akademi were established. Institutions such as the Gujarat Sahitya Parishad and Gujarat Sahitya Akademi representing the majority Gujarati literary establishment opposed dalit writing by asking whether 'lalit' (beauty) and 'dalit' (oppressed) could coexist. In recent years, the debate has become less forceful, and some dalit works have formed a part of the literary principle and found place in syllabi of many universities. All these signs point to an influx of dalit literature. The recent anthology of dalit short story, Vanboti Vartao offers no attempt at creating definitions and frameworks. On the contrary it displays confidence, range and energy until now overlooked.

It is not an exaggeration to say that most dalit short stories are expression of anger and protest expressed through a specific surroundings and language. A central incident of atrocity imposed upon a weak dalit by an upper caste patel or darbar, the rural environment of separate quarters for untouchables and language stand as features of a good dalit short story in Gujarat. Keeping that picture

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of culture and environment in mind, let us look at the recurrent themes of Gujarati dalit short stories.

The dirty, gloomy surrounding of a poor house form the physical backdrop of stories such as Dashrath Parmar's 'Paat', Madhukant Kalpit's 'Kulkatha', Harish Mangalam's 'Dayan' and many others. The vas itself is not a vast location; it consists of several parts such as 'vankar vas' (weavers' quarter), 'rohit vas' (tanners' quarter), 'bhangi vas '(sweepers' quarter) and is thus a mixture of different castes, customs and languages among the dalits. However, we hardly ever come to know of any communication amongst various communities through the stories mentioned above.The other stories like Pravin Darji's 'Maara Gaam Vachare', Joseph Macwan's 'Rotlo Najrai Gayo', Dalpat Chaunwn's 'Badlo', Madhukant Kalpit's 'Kulkatha', Arvind Veghda's 'Rakhopa na Samp' also echoes the same theme. Many stories focus upon the sub-community of vankars (weavers), a few ('Jeev', 'Aaghat') deal with tanners and their conditions. Repression to a greater or lesser extent, and anger or hurt as its response form a psychological backdrop which runs as a feature common to all the communities. Most stories show repression and injustice as an inevitable part of an untouchable's life. Resistance, on the whole is very rare, and if at all, it comes in some cases from women characters. Dalit women are the medium of exploitation for upper caste patels or darbars and the community has no choice but to submit to this cruel tradition. On the contrary, Haar Paar's 'Somali', Mohan Parmar's 'Thali' and Dilip Ranpura's 'Ratan' demonstrate dalit women raising their heads against rape and sexual exploitation. Apart from sexual exploitation, a very common trait is treachery or duplicity. Upper castes make use of dalit resources for curing diseases and childbirth as in Harish Mangalam's 'Utatiyo' and 'Dayan', for winning elections as in Swapnil Mehta's 'Kadaach', but debase the dalits once their interests are served. The hopelessness of a relationship between an upper caste and lower caste forms the pattern

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of B Kesharshivam's 'Reti no Mahal', Keshubhai Desai's 'Boteli Vas 'Mohan Parmar's Tslakalank'.

The less dominant themes and somewhat non-formulaic situations also occur sometimes. An interesting case in point is B Kesharshivam's 'God's Mercy', located in the disorderly times of communal riots in Gujarat. The story indicates harmony among Muslims and dalits and establishes the Hindu feudal order as the traditional enemy of all minorities. Shailesh Parmar handles internal politics within the dalit community, the appearance of a dalit brahmin very effectively in 'Dhol ni Dandiye'. The bhangi (sweeper) protagonist, taken aback by prejudice not from an upper caste master, but a post-Mandal dalit elite exults when the earlier is rudely reminded of his low caste. Another analysis of the lack of unity among the dalits is to be found in Dashrath Parmar's 'Jaat'. The educated, city-dwelling hero helps bridge gaps between the vankars and the rohits in order to prevent an misuse of dalit deities by upper castes. Daniel Macwan's 'Lohini Lagni' and Dalpat Chauhan's 'Thandu Lohi' expresses the theme of 're-visiting,' critical outsider's viewpoint. In 'Thandu Lohi', the visit brings back harsh memories of humiliation, its lingering effects continue when the protagonist continues to be called 'bhala no deekro' instead of by his title D.B. Parikh. Chandraben's story 'Dankh' brings out divergence inherent in the so-called followers of Gandhi who visit the Harijan ashram but do not accept food from a Harijan. The anxiety regarding food operates with intricacy in Mavji Maheshwari's 'Safe Distance'. After settling down in an upwardly movable urban colony, Ravjibhai takes comfort in the anonymity that city offers and express joy in the support his brahmin neighbour enlarges. The neighbour subtly avoids eating at Ravjibhai's house and maintains a 'safe distance'. The frequent theme of sexual exploitation mentioned earlier, finds a unique treatment in the hands of Jasumati Parmar, a dalit woman writer. The adversary is within - ready to deal his wife's

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body, out of poverty and desperation. The wife walks out, refusing to be 'Kali ni Rani', the third card in his gamble. Both Chandra Shrimali and Jasumati Parmar reinforce the double oppression of a dalit woman.

Literature of Protest

Digish Mehta, the renowned critic and educationist notes Protest literature, has a, "a referential weight: it implies a content which is specific, being grounded in history. When expressed in a literary manner, it seeks to bring out a reaction of a specific kind. To put it plainly, it serves not to ask whether dalit short stories discussed above satisfy literary needs, because literary parameters are insufficient for look into dalit literature. In an introduction to the Indian short story, Mohan Ramnan talks of the multiple influences at work on the Indian short story, so that an Indian author is exposed not only to English, but also to Irish, French, Russian. He further talks of the disturbance of linear tactics in the Indian short story and the occurrence of modernist features such as fantasy and magic realism. These questions when applied to dalit short stories, lose their connotation because they assume a fully educated society. Digish Mehta, writer and critic of Gujarati literature says: "Discussions on the difference between 'literary' and 'non-literary' texts originating from the west, usually assume the background of a fully literate society. A writer who seeks to give literary expression to a sense of resentment or objection against oppression would, in this context, adopt either of two courses available to him: (a) he would work within the literary tradition and would become accustomed or exploit, with whatever degree of success, the stylistic and other devices made available to him; and (b) he will withdraw, as the dalit writer does, from the whole area marked 'literary' and will fall back on 'writing' in the unrefined, primary sense taking recourse to oral and non-standardized forms of speech, and to forms. The choice of the mode of writing will itself constitute a gesture of protest". Thus any literary analysis

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has its explanation in the social history of the dalits and therefore tools of literary assessment with regard to dalit literature become extraneous.

Keeping in mind these things, we face many questions, still to be answered. To begin with, if protest literature belongs to history, why is the conduct of a tyrant and oppressed in Gujarati dalit short stories a historical? Why is a Patel or darbar in one story identical from another in a different story? Why is every dalit equally good and naive, without any resistance? Is the tyrannical 'other' always without and never within? Tyranny, as it obtains now in Gujarati dalit short story, is defined in a unilinear manner, its psychological and social flux fixed. It flows from the oppressor and moves towards the oppressed. The point is what happens to state and cultural machinery that, hardens the nature of oppression? The study of these questions and problems must take us into non-literary milieu. The unhistorical treatment is a re-enactment of the archetypal struggle between good and evil, central to Hindu folklore and many native traditions. The lack of historicisation may also have to do with the imperatives of a communitarian discourse. A dalit writer speaks not as an individual, but as a member of a community. The questions take us into the 'sociology' of dalit literature, which according to Manilal Patel, the dalit critic, is a meaningful way of examining dalit literature.

Another tricky absence in the body of Gujarati dalit short story is that of women writers. The two women writers mentioned earlier, Chandraben Shrimali and Jasumati Parmar are both from the subcommunities of garoda (the 'upper most' layer of brahmins among dalits) and vankar respectively. This in itself explains their presence and the absence of many others who could have come from less privileged communities. The absence of women writers has occluded forms of discrimination other than sexual exploitation. The double load of being a woman and an untouchable produces its own specific version of oppression, the representation of which is missing in the

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body of stories today. The aggression within a family, the structures of patriarchy, the responses of dalit men to normative rules of brahminism are persistently papered over by male voices, thereby creating a further imbalance of representation. The apparatus of selecting, printing, publishing, propagating also lie with the male dalit writers and Chandraben perceives patriarchy within the system as a major stumbling block.

It can be concluded from the above mentioned that the literary-social-political body of dalit short stories is common with inequalities and irregularities of representation. There are a number of 'absences' and explanations to those can be sought not in the 'aesthetics vs, ideology' example but in social history. As decades move, different emphases must take over in Gujarati dalit short story and the model of 'oppressor vs oppressed' will have to be discard to accommodate prevailing realities. This may also lead to a need of redefinition and readjustment of the dalit aesthetic. After all, will a dalit writer be able to employ a rural setting and language in order to communicate a more urban culture? Will the up-and-coming generations of the urban dalit have an admission to the community life? On the other hand, is the elision of his contemporary present a suggestion of a dalit writer's rebuttal to relocate his self in a different time and place and as a result, reshape the aesthetic? When faced with prevailing literary constraints of a brahminic culture, is it not vital for a dalit writer to avow himself through his specific locale and language? These questions have no clear-cut answers, but add up to further areas of reflection in dalit literature.

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Dalit in *The God of Small Things*

— Dr. M.B. Gaijan

सर्वेऽत्र सुखिनः सर्वे सन्तु निरामयाः।
सर्वे भद्रानि पश्यन्तु मा कश्चित् दुःखमाप्नुयात्।।

"Here, all should become happy, all should emancipate from the anxiety and agony, all should see the prosperity and progress of others, none should suffer any pain."

This was not truth for every Indian in the past but for the upper varnas. Because since the Vedic era, the Hindu Society was/is divided into the graded inequality and hierarchical anarchy. (वसुद्दैव कुटुम्बकम्) ("Vasudaiva Kutyumbakam") was only an utopia. Because of the graded inequality, the one section of Hindu society was always remained exploited and neglected. This community was disgustingly separated as untouchable. Thus the untouchability is a centuries old, deeply rooted Hindu's inhuman belief. According to the superstition "a touchable would defile, if he would touch an untouchable." It was injustice, practised by the Hindu society since long. The touchable, since past to the present time have not accepted untouchables as fellow human beings. The Hindu spirituality depicted in the Vedas, the Upanishads, the Purans and the Smritees emphasized on "Human Equality Enlightenment, Uplift, Love and Kindness" to all, not only

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to human beings but also for every living creature. But generally this spirituality remained untouchable by the Hindu society. The untouchables who have been persecuted were Dasa, Dasyu, Shudra, Untouchables, later on Harijan and again Dalit. Mahatma Gandhi had painfully said about the social evil as 'a disgrace on Hinduism."

Gandhi's idea to uplift untouchable by changing Hindu's hearts was never materialized. Thanks to the British Empire, during their rule; they first time legally tried to remove the social evil by imposing various laws. They were 'The Widow Remarriage Act of 1876" and The Caste Disability Removal Act of 1850." After the independence various constitutional rights are provided to uplift the oppressed community. Amendments after amendments are introduced but the centuries old disgust towards untouchables is not yet changed. That disgust has taken the new shape, like the old wine in the new bottle.

In the democratic India, at the end of the 20th century, still the untouchability is existing, this truth Arundhati has brought before the world. *"The God of Small Things,"* the prestigious 'Booker Prize' awarded novel depicts the cross caste conflict. As a matter of fact caste and sub-caste based social divisions we find in the Hindu Society since long. Untouchables are only found in the Hindu religious works, not in Islam or in Christianity. Christianity is world wide known for universal "brotherhood and humanism" but here, in this novel Arundhati has described the intense cross caste conflict, the conflict is not taking place between touchable Hindus and Untouchables, its between Syrian Christians and Untouchable. It shows that untouchables are not only suffering and torturing from Hindus but also from other religious communities in this democratic India. Thus untouchables are sandwiched between the Hindu majority and other religious minority.

In this novel, Ayemenem, a small village in Kerala, is very significant place. Ammu, a young woman whose father had worked as Joint Director in Imperial Etymology, Delhi, is very important person. Being an orthodox, her father had

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not paid more attention on her education and didn't take interest in selecting a suitable life partner for her. In the village like Ayemenem and the girl like Ammu has nothing to do except the household works and waiting for the unknown bridegroom.

Nobody from her family was thinking about her wedding. Ultimately she made her own way by selecting a Bengali, working as an Assistant Manager in a tea estate in Assam. It was her first attempt to break the social barrier – an inter community Love Marriage. In Rural India, even at today inter community caste love marriage is not accepted. It is considered as a disgrace on family and lineage. So immediately after her marriage, she was badly treated by her own family. Unfortunately she could not enjoy her marriage life for a long time. She had realized "marriage wrong man." (38) It was too late. She had to return to her village Ayemenem with her twins Estha – a boy and Rahel – a daughter. In rural India, a divorcee woman has only place to get shelter in her parents' house. In Ayemenem she was of no where, because the orthodox old Lady Baby Kochamma, the grand mother of the twins, hatefully says "A divorced daughter had no position any where at all". (45) As for divorced daughter from the inter community love marriage, she remained silent.

In Kerala, the paravans are considered as untouchables. When nobody from her family took care for her and her twins, naturally she would fascinated towards that who still love her and her kids, that was Velutha, an untouchable Dalit. Velutha taught the twins, boating and fishing. The kids enjoyed their learning because they didn't know "what was untouchability." Ammu also observed "the high delight" (175) on kids' faces, what else the rejected mother would expect than the happiness of her kids? The friendly meetings of the twins and Velutha had brought nearer to each other, the twins, Velutha and Ammu.

And consequently, gradually the young Ammu was fascinated towards the untouchable. She was attracted

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towards his exercised body' 'A swimmer's body. A swimmer carpenter's body." (175) Thus the sprouting of love in Ammu's bosom was very natural. The untouchable felt the same passion. Both of them have forgotten the ban "who should be loved, and how. And how much." (17) The Indian society, particularly Hindu orthodox, had imposed certain laws "Whom to Love." When we glance in the ancient literature of India, there are plenty evidences of that. According to the ban the untouchables were / are not allowed to love or marry upper caste women, while the other Varna's allowed to defile the untouchable women. Actually the inter caste relationship was thus banned in the Matsya Puran, one of the old Puranas.

> "If a low caste man wants to marry a high caste girl, and does so, would be punished with death. Similarly a high caste women marrying a low caste man, should be punished with death." (CCXXVI 131 II)

Though the ban was preached in past but even today is practised strictly in rural India. The deeply rooted hate for untouchable is still practised. It is only for the orthodox Hindu religion community but other religious communities also accept it. The rest of other religious Minority practises the Hindu social code of untouchability only to flatter the Hindu majority. But Ammu and Velutha, both had overthrown the imposed law. Here lust kindled from the both sides, no one had trapped any one. And "her seven years oblivion lifted off." (337) An untouchable's affair with a touchable woman is not granted in; rural India, in any community. Even untouchables wouldn't dare to do such things because they know the consequences. Velutha's father knew the consequences, so he rushed to inform about his son's affair, with view to punish him but the lady of the house spat on his face.

Boby Kochamma, in her youth was fascinated towards father Mullingan, a handsome Irish Monk, has cunningly rejected the affair by saying thus.

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> "How could she stand by the smells, haven't you noticed, they have a particular smell? These paravans"? (78)

She had mainly opposed the affair because it was with an untouchable. Various incidents prove that even in Christianity, there is untouchability. This incident was enough for the old Lady Baby Kochamma to remove an untouchable forever. It was due to the deeply rooted disgust towards untouchable.

Co-incident, Sophie's death, was done by Baby Kochamma to destroy Velutha. Actually she knew the fact; Velutha was not responsible for Sophie's death but the violent flow of a river Meenachal. But because of hate and revenge, she had filed F.I.R. against an innocent untouchable. Sophie was Ammu's brother Chacko's daughter who came to India with her English mother from England. Thus baby Kochamma's conspiracy to remove untouchable was due to her hatred towards Velutha.

Whenever an untouchable is accused for any crime, the touchable became united to remove him forever. It is the countrywide truth that revealed in the novel. "A posse of touchable policemen crossed the Meenachal River." (304) When they found Velutha, at that time he was sleeping. They treated him thus inhumanly. "They wake Velutha with their boots." (307) That shows they didn't touch Velutha directly but by their boots. These were the public servants of democratic India!

When the touchable police's operation was going on, at that time the twins - Estha and Rahel - were near by Velutha. They witnessed the barbaric incident thus.

> "They realized that man was beaten, was Velutha. They heard the thud on wood on flesh. Boot on bone. On teeth the muffled grunt when a stomach is kicked in. The muted crunch of skull on cement. The gurgle of blood on a man's breath when his lung is turn by the jagged end of a broken rib." (308)

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Still the crime was not proved, it was only the charge, but the touchable police had brutally treated the accused untouchable as a murderer. The policemen are not given this sort of liberty to treat the accused. This sort of victimized untouchable how long he would live? "Half an hour past midnight death come for him." (320) In this cross caste love affair, Ammu was not entrapped by Velutha. Willingly she had submitted herself, but Hindu dominated Indian Society would not allow the affair. Both of them had paid the highest price for that Velutha was killed and Ammu's family was scattered.

The climax of Ammu's misery was the Christian Inspector Thomas Mathew's malicious behaviour. When she reached the Kotryama Police station to inform the truth about Sophies's death and save Velutha, nobody noticed her. But the police inspector Mathew by tapping on her breasts with his baton, said; The Kottayam police station did not take statements from Vaishayas or illegitimate children." (8) What was her crime? love? Actually she had thrown away the imposed social code of Hindu's. Whom to Love, but not the Christian code. She had not done anything wrong but loved an untouchable, and consequently she became an untouchable vaishya whose breasts can be touched. Touched by baton! It shows that the Christian minority in India also tries to flatter and please the Hindu majority by hating the Untouchables.

The hatred towards untouchables cannot be removed until the society would accept them as the fellow human beings. By giving special rights or political protection that may be erased. In Kerala, the communists were in power; still it is the powerful political pary. They have accepted human Liberty, Equality and Fraternity. But in the case of untouchables they change the policy. Velutha was a card holder party member. When the Christian family knew his love affair, Velutlha immediately rushed to the party leader Mr. Pillai to solve the issue. But Mr. Pillai had shrewdly rejected his request thus "party was not constituted to support workers" indiscipline in their private life". (287) If

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he would interfere in the case Velutha wouldn't die. Thus, Mr. Pilia had refused to help Velutha on the base of "indiscipline in their private life" but the truth was something else. The communists were not out of the based social clutch:

> The Marxist worked from within the communal divides, never challenging them, never appearing not to." (66-67)

Thus the novelist has portrayed the socio-political realism of democratic India, where still one community is becoming the victim of the brutality of the majority and the flatterers of the majority. *"The God of Small Things"* is a story about love and brutality (B. Urvashi), the brutality against the Dalits. On one hand the Human Rights and values are globally, seriously considered, on other hand, in rural Indian this sort of atrocity against Dalits are going on. The Ayemenem incident of Killing Velutha is the microscopic vision of the orthodoxy's brutality against Dalits. In India plenty legal protections are provided to remove the atrocity against Dalits but they are only on the papers. It wouldn't change until the social attitude would change. If the Indian society would accept them, they wouldn't remain untouchable, socially and culturally. They would merge in the main stream. Then more Veluthas wouldn't die.

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Dalits : The Silence of the Marginalised and the Oppressed

— *Dr. (Mr.) Shibu Simon*
Mr. Sijo Varghese C

Introduction

In the post colonial scenario the term 'subaltern' gets wider perspective as it refers to the third world countries. In India, the term 'subaltern' becomes more relevant as it incorporates the issue of caste. The problem of caste segregation plays a major role in dividing the people of our country. The permanent victory of the subaltern is not possible until the subordination based on caste and creed comes to an end.

Ranajit Guha has given a new significance to the word 'subaltern' in the Indian cultural context, as it takes into consideration the subordination based on class, caste, age, gender and office. In India, the term 'Dalit' is widely used in the academic circuits than the word 'subaltern' and it signifies the oppressed sections of the society or to be more explicit the minority sections of the society who are subordinated to the activity of the ruling class. Dalit issues are popular in our country and they have an ancient history. This social evil was the direct result of the Hindu caste-system. There were four major class divisions in the society, such as *Brahmins*, the *Kshatriyas*, the *Vaishyas*, and the

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Sudras. The Brahmins were at the top and they represented the highest class of the society. They presumed that they were almost near to God; so, they administered priestly duties. The Kshatriyas were the warriors and thus the defenders of the society. The Vaishyas were ranked third among the class divisions and they were the business-community and producers of wealth. The Sudras were the labourers who engaged in the menial work. In the class hierarchy, they represented the low-caste people, with the sweepers and the scavengers. The sweepers and the scavengers are regarded as untouchables because of the filthy work they have to do. The so-called upper caste people believed that a touch by a sweeper or a scavenger would pollute them. Religion plays a crucial role in our country and Hindu religion emerges as the major religion. Except Hinduism, all other religions belong to different religious minorities. The presence of an 'untouchable' was considered to be a bad omen/sign to the Brahmins. The most ironic thing about the entire issue was that it was these untouchables who worked in the land for providing food to the Brahmins. To escape the scourge of untouchability, some of them were converted to Christianity. But the Christians remained a dominant group, and they did not accept the newly converted people. So, separate priests, bishops and churches were provided for the new Christians. The moment they were converted to Christianity they lost all their benefits which the government had granted to the scheduled castes and tribes.

In Indian writing in English, Dalits have been represented to their core by writers like Mulk Raj Anand in the pre-independent era and Arundhati Roy in the post modern context. Mulk Raj Anand was the true champion of the underdogs. He was the first writer who represented the victimization of the Dalits in different strata of the society. Anand's novels vindicate the injustice and inequality that are rampant in the Society. *Untouchable* was Anand's first novel and it was published in 1935. The theme of the novel, untouchability, was so relevant at that time and it

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directly addressed the social evil. This novel was evidently written with a specific purpose which was to create public opinion against the evil of untouchability. The novel records the experiences of an eighteen-year-old sweeper boy called Bakha, in the course of a single day at Bulandshahr. The boy is in charge of the public latrines of the town but the most degrading aspect of his life is that it exposes him to the contempt of the caste Hindus and renders him an untouchable. He has to carry the burden of being an untouchable and very often he has been accused of his caste. It is not sympathy that these untouchables want, but warmth of human love and justice tendered with mercy. The novel *Untouchable* ends on an optimistic note when the central character Bakha listens to a speech by Mahatma Gandhi and to a discourse by Iqbal Nath Sarashar, a poet cum journalist.

Gramsci was credited with expounding a new dimension to the Marxist doctrine by introducing the term 'subaltern'. He was a humanist who could twist the Marxian ideology more applicable to the lowest strata of the society. Gramsci inculcated the method of persuasion to attain social justice in the society. He adopted the term 'subaltern' to refer to those groups in the society who are subjected to the hegemony of the ruling class (55). The category of subaltern includes peasants, workers and all those non-hegemonic groups who have been denied access to power. The subaltern class doesn't have a history but their history can be written and then it would appear to be as complex as that of the dominant classes. The subaltern classes would achieve their voice when the subaltern history is properly represented. But the history of the dominant class has become the official one, leaving no space for the marginalized to raise their voice. Antonio Gramsci argues that subaltern classes by themselves are not organized and they have less access to the power of representation. He says (52):

> The subaltern classes are not unified and can not unite until they are able to become 'state'. Their history, therefore, is intertwined with

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> that of the civil society and thereby with the
> history of the states and groups of states.

Subaltern studies were launched in India in the beginning of 1980s, when Ranajit Guha edited several volumes of *Subaltern Studies: Writings on South Asian History and Society.* In his preface to the first volume, Guha stated that his aim was to promote a systematic and informed discussion of subaltern terms in the field of South Asian Studies and to help rectify the elitist bias characteristic of much research and academic work in this particular area.

Subaltern studies help to understand the history of the working class and the future of the working class emancipation. The subaltern studies are relevant in the case of India, because India was a subaltern as a British colony and after the independence; we were subordinated to the neo-colonialism of the western world.

Arundhati Roy has vividly portrayed the various atrocities against the subalterns and in particular the problems of the Dalit Christians in her novel *The God of Small Things.* When the Christian missionaries came to Kerala, they began to convert the lower caste people, such as pulayas and parayas into Christianity. The newly converted Christians became totally helpless when the dominant class within the church rejected them as unwanted people. The pathetic plight of these people has been represented in her novel *The God of Small Things* from a historical point of view.

Representations of Subalterns in Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things*

Roy has represented subalternity in a hierarchical structure of power in her novel *The God of Small Things.* Roy makes a distinction between the oppressor and the oppressed in the third chapter of the novel and it is being entitled as "The Big Man Laltain, Small Man The Mombatti". By the term 'Laltain' Roy means the high class people and

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Mombatti refers to the weaker sections of the society. The two central characters of the novel Velutha and Ammu constitute the Mombattis in the novel and all the other power exerting people, such as Chacko, Baby Kochamma and Comrade Pillai come under the banner of Laltains. Velutha is a victim of caste subalternity. He is the representation of the untouchable in the novel *The God of Small Things*. He is black in complexion and there is an irony within the name Velutha, as it suggests 'something white'. Comrade Pillai, who is supposed to safeguard the rights of the poor, acts against Velutha for reasons of caste (278):

> He may be very well okay as a person. But other workers are not happy with him. Already they are coming to me with complaints... you see comrade, from local stand point, these caste issues are very deep-rooted.

Velutha, the God of Small Things in the novel, was punished by the police for an unknown reason. He was accused of murdering Sophie Mol and molesting Ammu. When Mammachi heard about the illicit relationship between Ammu and Velutha, she summoned Velutha to Ayemenem house. Roy describes graphically (283-284):

> When Velutha arrived, Mammachi lost her bearings and spewed her blind venom, her crass, insufferable insults, at a panel in the sliding-folding door until Baby Kochamma tactfully swiveled her around and aimed her rage in the right direction, at Velutha standing very still in the room.

The false story was fabricated by Baby Kochamma to take revenge upon Velutha for his relationship with Ammu. Since Velutha was a subaltern, the police turned a deaf ear to his plea. Velutha approached Comrade Pillai for help since he was a card-holder of the Communist party. Pillai refused to help him and reminded him, saying (28), "It's not in the party's interest to take such matters. Violating party discipline means violating party unity". Velutha was

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neglected both by the police and the political party to which he owed his allegiance. When Velutha was in police custody, Ammu rushed to the police station and appealed to police that Velutha was innocent. But Ammu was humiliated in the police station by the police inspector Thomas Mathew. The subalterns have no scope for convincing things. They have been forced to maintain the age old tradition of silence by the Laltains. Both Velutha and Ammu failed in their attempt to communicate to their authority. The Mombattis have never been allowed to voice their protest against Laltains, as they have been silenced to nothingness.

Arundhati Roy in her novel *The God of Small Things* has presented the hardships and the deplorable conditions of the people who are segregated on the basis of their caste. Even before independence, caste segregation existed among the Keralites. And when Christianity came with an offer of casteless religion, some of the lower caste people were readily converted to that religion with a hope of living in a casteless community. They were never able to fulfill their hope, as they had jumped from the frying pan to the fire.

The Parayas and Pulayas joined the Anglican Church to escape the scourge of untouchability. They received a little money and food as an added incentive. They were known as rice Christians. They were made to have separate churches, with separate services and separate priests. As a special favour, they were even given their own separate parish bishop. After independence, they found that they were not entitled to any government benefits like job reservation or bank loans at low interest rates because officially on paper they were Christians and therefore casteless. "It was a little like having to sweep away your footprints without a broom. Or worse, not being allowed to leave foot prints at all" (Roy 74).

The newly converted Christians were torn between two worlds - one rejected by them and other not ready to accept them. Mammachi recalls to her memory the rigid caste system that existed in our country (73-74):

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> Paravans were not allowed to touch anything that touchable touched. Paravans were expected to crawl backwards with a broom sweeping away their footprints. Paravans like other untouchables were not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke, to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed.

Velutha dared not to sweep off his footprints as his forefathers used to do when the caste system was observed. But in this independent democratic country, his footprints are erased by the authority, especially the police and the political party, for his venture to make love towards a touchable woman (Prasad 172). Baby Kochamma lured Estha and Rahael with a false conviction that they were responsible for the death of Sophie Mol. "It's a terrible thing to take a person's life. It's the worse thing that anyone can ever do. Even God doesn't forgive that" (Roy 317). Baby Kochamma threatened the children to point their finger at Velutha for the death of Sophie Mol, in order to save their lives and that of Ammu. The children agreed to the proposal of Baby Kochamma to rescue Ammu and thereby maintain the honour of the family. It was Baby Kochamma who chose Estha, "Knowing him to be the more practical of the two. The more tractable. The more far sighted. The more responsible" (Roy 319).

Velutha, the God of Small Things in the novel, died in the police custody at the Kottayam Police Station. The Police didn't listen to his plea as he was a Dalit and not supported by anyone. Velutha was dumped in the pauper's pit even though he was a Christian. An innocent carpenter who had the gift of an engineer had to become the scapegoat for the prestige of Ayemenem family. Baby Kochamma and Comrade Pillai were responsible for the inhuman death of Velutha. The dying moments of Velutha in the police station had been described by Roy in the novel as (308-310):

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> Boot on bone. On teeth. The muffled grunt when a stomach is kicked in... his skull was fractured in three places. His nose and both his cheek bones were smashed, leaving his face pulpy, undefined. The blow to his mouth had split his upper lip and broken six teeth. Four of his ribs were splintered, one had pierced his left lung, which was what made him bleed from his mouth.

Subalternity and Gender

'The eternal other', 'the perpetual minor', 'an occasional and incomplete being', 'a kind of imperfect man' – woman is everything but a *person*. The historical accident is elevated and abased simultaneously. She suffers during wartime and she suffers in peacetime. She has to fight in a situation where every revolution has a meaning but feminism. She is tagged along for every protest that concerns the society, yet, she has to wage her own war in a situation where only empty rights prevail; where each trivial victory is but a brief escapade. At the lower caste level, a more wretched landscape presents itself: Dalit women are paraded naked, raped; her children and husband are forced to drink urine; she is made to carry shit on her head and told to force it down her throat too. She is ostracized. She is prostituted; her sexuality is religion's playground. Even Dalit men have debased her to a level lower than where they find themselves in; from where they are crying for emancipation.

Subalterns can be found even among the educated wealthy upper classes. The silent women in the society are repressed by the male dominant concepts and worldviews. Ammu in the novel becomes unwanted in her own home after her love marriage fails with a Bengali man. Women had no right to family property after their marriage, especially in the Christian denomination. When Ammu comes back to her home, Chacko asserts his position by

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stating that the house belongs to him. Chacko once again makes the idea clear by informing Ammu, "What is yours is mine and what is mine is also mine" (Roy 57).

Ammu was not given higher education by Pappachi, while Chacko had been sent to Oxford for higher studies. Ammu selected her future husband when she lived in Calcutta with her distant aunt. She knew that her father won't give her any dowry and everything would be inherited by the males. Ammu had to leave her husband when he asked her to sacrifice her honour for an unknown person.

The views of the patriarchal society are reflected in the words of Baby Kochamma who subscribed wholeheartedly to the commonly held view that a married daughter had no position in her parent's home. As for a divorced daughter, she had no position anywhere at all. And as for a divorced daughter from a love marriage, well, words could not describe Baby Kochamma's outrage. As for a divorced daughter from an inter community love marriage, Baby Kochamma chose to remain quiveringly silent on the subject (Roy 45-46).

Ammu was tormented by her family for her relationship with Velutha. She had to seek a job outside for her survival. But she was found dead at the Bharat Lodge in Alleppey, where she had gone for a job interview as someone's secretary. The church refused to bury her, as she had gone against the norms of the church. Ammu's dead body was cremated in an electronic crematorium. "Her ashes. The gift from her bones. The teeth from her smile. The whole of her crammed into a little clay pot. Receipt No.Q498673" (Roy 163). Mammachi had great love for her son Chacko as he had stopped Papachi's heavy blows on Mammachi. Mammachi allowed Chacko's 'Man's needs' with the poor women of the factory (Roy 168). Mammachi had built a separate entrance for Chacko's room so that "the object of his needs would not have to go traipsing through the house" (Roy169).

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The term subaltern is very much relative. Velutha is a subaltern as he belongs to the lowest class in the society. Chacko, who asserts all the power in Ayemanem house, becomes a subaltern when he goes to Oxford for higher studies. When we compare women with men, women become the subaltern. So, the subaltern group may change their identity and may become the dominant one as in the case of Chacko. Chacko and Ammu committed the same mistake but the entire issue was treated differently by the patriarchal society. The double standardness of the society was seen through the treatment of Chacko and Ammu episode where Ammu was severely punished.

Gayatri Spivak proposes a theory of subalternity in her essay "Can the Subaltern Speak?" She threw a challenge to the race and class blindness of the western academy, asking "Can the Subaltern Speak" (284). In the context of colonial production, the subaltern has no history and can't speak; the subaltern as female is more deeply in shadow (Spivak 287). It is true in the case of Velutha and Ammu in the novel *The God of Small Things*. They are victimized for the sake of others and they have to carry the badge of humiliation and contempt all their life. The subalterns try to speak but they are not able to have transactions between the speakers and the listeners. When Velutha was arrested by the police, Ammu went to the police station to set things right. Ammu became the object of laughter when the police inspector retorted, saying, "The police knew all they needed to know" and that "the Kottayam police didn't take statements from *Veshyas* or the illegitimate children" (Roy 8). The subaltern voice is being misinterpreted by the authorities as they have no power. So, the act of communication doesn't take place between the speaker and the listener as the message is being distorted by the other elements. The subaltern is destined to remain in silence, even when they try to articulate it to the authorities.

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Dalit Feminism: The Oppressed Oppressing the Oppressed

Dalit men react to the victimisation they suffer at the hands of the upper caste people by pouring it out on their wives and their daughters. Perhaps, this is one of the worst tragedies of humanity that the oppressed themselves attempt to fill the emptiness by reducing their own women to drudgery and further oppression. Hiremath quotes Manorama, a Dalit feminist celebrity:

> If you dig deeper, you will see that the upper caste ideology has percolated down to the lowest levels and that's where we are. The standards are set by the upper castes. And it's so natural that those who inevitably look upward, end up following them. Hence, you will see many Dalit Brahminising themselves. This way they think they elevate themselves to a higher level.

Women, especially upper caste women, contribute to the oppression by protecting their own subjugation, willingly or unwillingly. They not only adhere to the status quo, they help it perpetuate by keeping the spiral of silence intact. When they accept the status quo, life is much easier and they don't have to fight for anything. They get perks and rewards. Patriarchs are also happy because the existential order is not altered. Manorama, whose life has been spent on mobilizing Dalit women through a large number of organisations, confirms (Hiremath):

> Gender oppression is the same for all women irrespective of their caste. But when it comes to poor Dalit women, the issue is multi-layered. There may be some options available for upper-caste women like walking out on a bad marriage. But what will a Dalit woman do if she doesn't even have a shelter? ... Dalit women's priorities are different from adivasi women or women belonging to minorities.

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Conclusion

India is a land of varieties and vitalities and unity in diversity seems to be the driving force of our country. But a lot of disparities in the name of class, caste and creed exist within the country. Artificial divisions are being promoted by the vested private interests. People are divided on the basis of caste so as to cause divisions in the society. The primary objective of such kind of class system seems to provide cheap labour available in the society. The Sudras have been convinced of the fact that it was their duty to do the menial jobs.

Mulk Raj Anand had wielded his pen in an attempt to eradicate untouchability from the society. Anand was inspired by the Gandhian principles to fight the menace of caste system in our country. Gandhi had visited so many places in our country to pacify the agitations and he was a true prophet to carry out the message of love and fraternity. When the constitution of India was drafted by Dr. B.R Ambedkhar, he had laid special rights to the scheduled castes and tribes. These rights are enjoyed by the people only on the condition that they should have sufficient documents to prove their identity as per the government norms. Arundhati Roy has focused in her novel *The God of Small Things* on the issue of rigid caste system. Roy's novel explores how the parayas and pulayas have lost all their benefits of reservation in the name of caste. Even after independence, the marginalization of the Dalits still continues to hold its prominent place in the society. The Dalits are naturally gifted people who can excel in different fields, but the societal class system doesn't allow them to do so. Nirzari Pandit sums up the pathetic condition of an untouchable, saying, "The accident of being born an untouchable, handicaps a person in all spheres of life. In spite of his extraordinary mental and physical abilities, he has no rights to live a normal life" (175). The Dalits have been marginalized throughout the past and Roy has tried to construct a history of the Dalits in her novel *The God of Small Things*.

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Pity and Plight of the Dalit and the Defenceless in *The God of Small Things*

— *Dr. Amar Nath Prasad*

> Art properly so called is no recreation; it can't be learned at spare moments, nor pursued when we have nothing better to do. It is no handiwork for drawing room tables, no relief of the innui of boudoirs; it must be understood and taken seriously, or not at all.
>
> —Ruskin

Arundhati Roy, the Booker Prize winner novelist, is known to all not only for her new and original style but also for her thought provoking attitude regarding social consciousness. Her very first book, *The God of Small Things,* which registered a tremendous sale all over the world, deals with, apart from many other things, the universal theme of social consciousness e.g., a confrontation between the "Laltain and the Mombatti"; class antagonism and class exploitations; exposure of the tyranny and injustice the untouchable have to suffer without any rhyme or reason; the insult and abuse the women of the society have to tolerate and above all, the trials and tribulations, the 'fret and fever', the deserted and the defenceless have to pass through in the police custody and in a caste-ridden societal structure. Her other books, *The End of Imagination*

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and *The Greater Common Good* point out respectively the author's apocalyptic vision of the nuclearization in India and abroad and her rage and anger against the government and the state authority to the sufferers of the big dam projects of our country. Arundhati Roy is of the opinion that the society can achieve its goal successfully only when there is no gap between the poor and the rich; between the dalit and the possessed, between the 'Laltain' and the "Mombatti" In one of her interviews, she rightly holds the view:

> Fiction for me has been a way of trying to make sense of the world as I know it. It is located very close to me this book. It is located in the village I grew up in. If I had to put it very simply, it is about trying to make the connections between the smallest of things and the biggest ones and to see how they fit together.[2]

One of the themes which ring the note of *The God of Small Things* is the truthful portrayal of the plight of the women in society and their Marathon struggle for seeking the sense of 'identity' in a male-dominated conservative framework. The social structure of an Indian woman is full of many ups and downs, ifs and buts. Life offers little choice for a forsaken woman like Ammu, the central character, who yearns for pleasure and happiness and a life far from shackles or constrains. The narrator portrays a detail picture of the lady's childhood to adolescence, to the experience of marriage to a sympathetic and affectionate mother, to a rebel wife who challenges the agelong hypocritical moral stand of a patriarchal family. As a little girl, Ammu had to face cares and anxieties, fret and fever of life. She had seen the cruelty of her father, Pappachi, who used to beat her and her mother, Mammachi with a brass vase. Once it so happened that her father tore apart of the shoes she had brought for herself. She was also deprived of the higher education because, according to Pappachi, college education is not at all useful for a girl. This shows that Pappachi is a man of schizophrenia. He behaves like

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a decent man but demonstrates his male ego and bourgeois mentality when he tyrannize his wife and child: "not content with having beaten his wife and daughter, he tore down curtains, kicked furniture and smashed a table lamp."[3] Marriage for him is the male's domination over woman and women are nothing but the flowers in the hands of man.

Ammu paid a visit to one of her relatives in Calcutta where at some one's wedding reception she met her future husband who was on vocation from his job: He was an assistant manager of a tea estate in Assam. Ammu was in a hurry to marry him because she knew that in Ayemenem, people were quite dead against her wishes and so something was better than nothing. The author observes:

> "Ammu didn't pretend to be in love with him. She just weighed the odds and accepted. She thought that any thing, anyone at all, would be better than returning to Ayemenem. She wrote to her parents informing them of her decision. They didn't reply."(p. 39)

But soon after the marriage Ammu discovered that she had jumped out of the frying pan into the fire. Her husband whom she loved so much, proved to be an alcoholic. He even went to the extent of asking her wife to satisfy the sexual desire of Mr. Hollick, his boss, so that his job could be saved. This extreme humiliation created a sense of great hatred in the heart of Ammu for her husband. In a scuffle, she hit her husband with a heavy book and left the place with the twins – Estha and Rahel. Ammu returned to Ayemenem with her milled out cheeks and there too, she found her parent cool and indifferent to her and her children. Her eyes welled up when she saw the miserable condition of two children. She imagined her twins "like a pair of small bewildered frogs engrossed in each other's company, lolloping arm in arm down a highway full of hurtling traffic." (p. 43)

It is to be noted that women have been the subject of great mystery and controversy in our history and traditions,

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myths and legends. She is allegedly charged with so many drawbacks mostly imaginary. It is said that she is temptation symbolised; more a Fury than a Fairy. Her charms are irresistible but they invariably spell ruin and disaster. She is wily like a serpent, domineering like a tiger and fickle like a weathercock. Moreover, her passion is unquenchable and she gets pleasures in casting her net on her victims. Like a queen Bee she draws her lover into her web only to crush him in the end. She is always conscious of her dress, jewels and frippery. A woman is also generally termed as one who loves ease and pleasure, wants attention and slavish devotion. She is empty-headed, narrow-minded obstinate and vain.

But we should not forget that most of the changes cited above are mostly concocted. A woman is generally more emotional, sensitive and tender though she is also endowed with a greater power of endurance and patience. She can be viewed in numerous ways, but none of her facets is so overwhelming as the physical attraction she arouses for herself in the heart of the male sex. In this field of love and mating, she plays a role so exceedingly significant that the very basis of creation and procreation will come to a standstill. It is here that we find her in the role of a beloved, a wife and a mother. She forms the pivot and nucleus of family life. She may be less adventurous than man, more prone to stay at one place and stick to a regulated pattern of existence. Without the presence of the woman, home is not home but a dreary wilderness. A good daughter, an affectionate mother, a loyal wife—it is these that create a heavenly atmosphere in our earthly life. G.B. Shaw, in his famous play, *Candida* has given a high pedestal to the woman. So, it is not the woman but men who are fickle in their opinion. Shakespeare in his famous play, *As You Like It* says: "Men are April when they woo, December when they wed."[4] History is replete with numerous examples of the physical prowess and endurance of woman. So, it is wrong to say that women are the bundle of evils. Actually speaking, she has a great place in the life of man. If man

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is a flower, the fragrance is woman. If man is a ship, the radar is woman. She can be sweet as well as bitter; kind as well as cruel; tender as well as rough, soft and seductive at time but elusive and hard to please also. Isaac Pocock rightly holds:

> Oh say not woman's love is bought
> With vain and empty treasure
> Oh say not woman's heart is caught
> By every idle pleasure.
> When first her gentle bosom knows
> Love's flame, it wanders never
> Deep in her heart the passion glows;
> She loves and loves for ever.[5]

This is what Arundhati Roy wants to express in the novel *The God of Small Things.* She flings a harsh irony on the man's domination over woman. She seems to say that women are not a mere toy or an object of pleasure or a means of gratifying the men's baser passions but the noble and richest part of a man's life. She gives a good retort to what Nietzsche observes:

> God created woman. And boredom did indeed cease from the moment—but many other things ceased as well. Woman was God's second mistake.[6]

Well, Chacko, a hypocritical male character of the novel, the brother of Ammu, long ago just managed to pass his exam at Balliol College in Oxford. What a great irony! A great gap! A great step-motherly treatment! Chacko who is a male person of the Ayemenem house was sent to Britain to study. But Ammu, on the other hand, was not allowed to study further. The reason is that she is a woman and so she has no right to go to college, because the college studies corrupt a lady. Even today, though inspite of a fundamental improvement in woman's stature, we see in the village of India that the conservative and superstitous mind of a large number of people are against the higher education of girls.

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This grave problem can be seen mostly in conservative Muslim family where 'purdah' is strictly maintained and also in the rural folks where women are supposed to be meant for only mating and procreating, serving and nourishing. Anees Jung, a revolutionary author remenisces in her book *Unveiling India*:

> But the good life it would seem was designed only for men. Page after page in the old album unfolds groups and groups of them, ceremonially dressed, naturally guarding a rite which they deemed was bestowed on them. No woman are part of this rite on them except those from abroad usually the West... My mother remains absent in the only family portrait that rest on the last page of the album. Her seven children are grouped solemnly around a father, proud in the colour black. The inscriptions below the picture reads, 'Hosh Ki Duniya, Hosh being my father's pen name. My mother, it appears has no stand. Where was she when the portrait was taken? In one of the back rooms perhaps or standing behind a 'chilman' the ubiquitous bamboo curtain designed to conceal woman from the outside but not the out side from them[7]

Chacko failed in almost every other respect including his marriage with Margaret, an English girl who deserted him. He is in charge of the lpe - household and so he asserts his position whenever he can. He cynically tells his sister Ammu: "What's yours is mine and what's mine is also mine;" Why? Because 'Ammu' as a daughter had no claim to the property and she had 'no locusts stand I" (p. 57). It is a great irony that a daughter estranged from the husband is tortured and tyrannized in the parent's house. But on the other hand, an estranged son, Chacko, not only receives warm welcome but also remains the rightful inheritor of the family's wealth and fortune. When he flirts with low women,

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he is encouraged by Pappachi in the name of "Man's Needs (p. 268) whereas the same behaviour of Ammu is termed as illicit, untraditional and sinful: she is being locked in a room and is beaten black and blue.

Thus, the novelist lashes out at the hypocritical moral code of society, which makes a great difference between men and women. As a matter of fact, both men and women are the two wheels of the same chariot or the two phases of the same coin. But it is a great fault in the man that he fails to understand and appreciate the nobler and purer side of a woman's love. Man's love is just like a torrent which spends its force quickly but a woman's love is a stream which flows steadily and smoothly for ever. Love for man is a passing phase; for woman it is the essence of her being. To quote again Anees Jung:

> In this complex pantheon of diversities the Indian woman remains the point of unity, unveiling through each single experience a collective consciousness prized by a society that is locked in morta combat with the power and weakness of age and time. She remains the still centre, like the centre in a potter's wheel, circling to create new forms, unfolding the continuity of a racial life, which in turn has "encircled and helped her acquire a quality of concentration.[8]

It is to be noted here that *The God of Small Things* presents a confrontation between 'The Big Man the Laltain and Small Man the Mombatti.' In other words, the book shows maladjustment between The God of Big Things (Pappachi, Baby Kochamma, Mammachi, Chacko, Comrade Pillai and Inspector Thomas Mathew) and The God of Small Things (Ammu, Velutha, Rahei, Estha, Sophie Mol). By the term 'Laltain', Roy means the big guns of society. Both 'Laltain' and 'Mombatti' give us light and burn another lamp. The 'Laltain' is well fed and well protected. It can bravely face the blowing wind. But on the other hand, the 'Mombatti' has no glass, no protection, no support. It can

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easily be blown out by the surge of wind. But the advantage of the 'Mombatti' is that it can soon light another lamp; 'Laltain', on the other hand, is somewhat stubborn to burn other's light. Thus, through this fine connotation, the author has successfully tried her best to arouse our sense of pity and catharsis for the Mombatties, the downtrodden and haves-not, the dalit and the deserted, the marginalised and the defenceless. In the last of the novel we see that the two Mombatties, Ammu and Velutha have to forsake the big things and indulge in the small things.

> "Even later, on the thirteen nights that followed this one instinctively they stuck to the small things. The big things ever lurked inside. They knew that there was nowhere for them to go. They had nothing. No future. So they stuck to the Small Things (p. 338)

II

The other dalit of the novel who bears the brunt of social persecution is Velutha, an untouchable. Though he is a paravan, an outcast, he is gifted with so many virtues. He symbolically stands for the 'God of Small Things'. He is an expert mechanic and craftsman. Perhaps this is why Mammachi employs him in her factory to do a carpenter's work. But the workers employed in the factory are not happy to see Velutha as a carpenter. Velutha is also seen taking part in political activity and fighting for the cause of Marxism. The twings are very fond of him and are highly impressed by his craftsman's skilled hand. He converts himself into the Christian religion only to immune from the victimization of a casteist society. But his conversion and his technical expertise, apart from many other good things, never bring any fruitful result in this cruel and callous society. Velutha, along with his father, always goes to the Ayemenem House to deliver coconut plucked from the trees. But they are never allowed to enter the room. They were not permitted to touch a thing that a 'Touchable' touched. Mammachi, Estha's grandmother remembers a day:

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> "When paravans were expected to crawl backward with a broom, sweeping away their foot-prints so that Brahmin and Christians wouldn't defile themselves by accidentally stepping into a paravan's foot-print. In Mammachi time, paravans, like other untouchables were not allowed to walk on public roads, not allowed to cover their upper bodies, not allowed to carry umbrellas. They had to put their hands over their mouths when they spoke to divert their polluted breath away from those whom they addressed". (p. 73-74)

It is to be noted that untouchability is one of the greatest evils our country has been facing from the time immemorial. In the *Manu Smriti,* the Hindu's law book of social code and domestic life, we see the pathetic picture of the untouchable who are deprived of gaining knowledge particularly the Vedic knowledge. An untouchable, according to this book, has no right to go to the temples; no liberty to listen to the incantations of the Vedas or other great scriptures. They are also deprived of the right of reading and studying the language, Sanskrit which is supposed to be the richest language of the world. And this resulted in the deterioration of this great language, which has come to be almost a standstill these days. So one of the causes of the degeneration of Sanskrit language is untouchability and perhaps this is why Mahatama Gandhi and Ambedkar, R.N. Tagore and Swami Vivekanand, Maharshi Dayanand and Bal Gangadhar Tilak—all have given a scathing attack on the castrist mentality of India. Mahatama Gandhi went to the extent of saying the untouchable, 'Harijan', that is, the man of God. But in spite of their best efforts and many constitutional provisions, untouchability is still seen somewhere in direct form and elsewhere in a subdued way. Mulk Raj Anand presents a truthful portrayal of untouchability in his famous novel, *Untouchable.* Bakha, the protagonist of the novel, has to suffer insult and abuse without any rhyme or reason. He suffers only because he is an untouchable. In a fit of anger he bursts out:

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> Why are we always abused? The sanitary inspector that day abused my father. They always abuse us. Because we are sweepers. Because we touch dung. They hate dung. I hate too; that is why I came here. I was tired of working on the latrines every day. That is why they don't touch us—the high castes.[9]

Thus, untouchability is that disease which creates contagion in our social structure. It is the evil which eats into the vitality of a healthy nation. E.M. Forster rightly observes:

> The sweeper is worse off than a slave for the slave may change his master and his duties and may even become free, but the sweeper is bound for ever, born into a state from which he can't escape and where he is excluded from social intercourse and the consolation of his religion. Unclean himself, he pollutes others when he touches them. They have to purify themselves, and to rearrange their plans for the day. Thus, he is a disgusting as well as a disquieting object to the orthodox as he walks along the public roads, and it is his duty to call out and warn them that he is coming. I remember on my visits to India noticing that the sweepers were more sensitive looking and more personable than other servants and I knew one who had some skill as a poet.[10]

Arundhati Roy, a great champion of the cause of the dalit and the deserted points out those unnoticed shades of a social problem which generally escapes the eyes of social scientists. Velutha's grandfather Kelan, along with a number of other untouchables embraced Christianity to escape the scourge of untouchability. But they, later on found that they had done a blunder. Though they were given separate churches and separate priests and in a special favour they were even given their own separate Pariah Bishop, but after 1947, they found they were not entitled to any government's benefits like job reservation nor bank

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loans at low interest. Why? Because they were Christians and so casteless. Roy says: "It was little like having to sweep away yoūr foot-prints without a broom. Or worse, not being allowed to leave foot-prints at all. (74)

It is interesting to note that Roy's portrayal of the plight of the untouchable is very near to that of Mulk Raj Anand. Velutha is very close to Bakha in both his vision and vesture. He, like Bakha, has to fight for his existence in society. He has to struggle hard to achieve a sense of identity. Once Bakha inadvertently touches a caste Hindu in the market. The castemen begin to hurl at him abuse and rebuke. Bakha apologizes and entreats, but in vain. It is a Muslim tongawallah who comes to his rescue. What an irony! A Hindu humiliating a Hindu but a Muslim consoling him! The basic difference between Bakha and Velutha is that the former is more active and aggressive than the latter. Velutha never believes in a frontal attack. He is a man of sober nature and mild behaviour. But Bakha, on the other hand, always strives to raise hail and fire (though he doesn't do it) on the high caste people:

> But there was a smouldering rage in his soul. His feeling would rise like a spurts of smoke from a half smothered fire in a fitful jerks when the recollection of abuse or rebuke he had suffered kindled a spark in the ashes of remorse inside him. Why was all this? He asked himself in the soundless speech of cells receiving and transmitting emotions, which was his usual way of communicating; with himself. Why was all this fuss? Why was he so humble? I could have struck him.[11]

Such emotions, full of rage and anger don't find any place in the character of Velutha. He never behaves a fuming and roaring tiger: never tries to hammer the age-old norms of society and traditions; never behaves like a rough and savage man—a man who has nothing to do with etiquette and manner, decorum and decency. He is a man of innocence and simplicity, the God of Small Things, the

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God of Loss, a man who knows how to make intricate toys tiny wind mills, rattles, minute jewel boxes out of dried palm reeds; a man who could carve perfect boats out of tapioca stems and figurines on cashew nuts. When Mammachi decides to enclose the back verandah, it is Velutha who designs and builds the strong folding door. According to the author he knows more about the machines in the factory than anyone else. Mammachi often said that if only he hadn't been a paravan, he might have become an engineer' (p. 75)

Yes, even a dalit or an untouchable can become an engineer or a doctor or a lawyer or a professor if he is given proper education and proper facilities. God never makes any difference between a touchable and an untouchable; between the poor and the rich; between the rough and the sublime. The minds of all men are almost equal. The thing which is needed is to appreciate the discarded and the abandoned and to dive deep into the bosom of the sea to dig out pearls and gems which are always hidden. So, the obscure living can't be condemned. They are the significant competent of the nation in the sense that they work honestly in the fields. The economy of the country can't remain in its key without the co-operation of the dalit and the down-trodden. They, thus, can't be consigned to oblivion. Thomas Gray in his famous poem, *Elegy Written in a Country Churchyard* rightly observes:

Full many a gem of purest ray serene,
The dark unfathomed caves of ocean bear.
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen;
And lost its fragrance in the desert air.[12]

In spite of all these great virtues in Velutha, he doesn't command respect and proper treatment in society. Vellya Paapen, the father of Velutha is strongly dead against any type of education or advance knowledge in a paravan. He thinks that in a paravan they could (and would and indeed should) be construed as insolence. He always grudges the craftsmanship and natural skills of Velutha. Further, Vellya

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quickly degenerates into nagging and bickering and consequently there is a sense of unpleasantness between father and son. In course of time, Velutha begins to avoid going home. He works late, catches fish in the river and cooks it in an open fire. He also spends the night outdoors. All of a sudden, he disappears for at least five months. He doesn't say anybody about his exile. When he comes to Ayemenem, Mammachi again rehires him as the factory carpenter and the general maintenance of the whole factory is given charge to him. But this act of help causes a great stir in the factory workers. Why? Because the touchable workers of the factory are so wild with casteism that they think that paravans are not meant to be carpenters. So, in order to keep the workers happy, Mammachi pays Velutha less than she would give to Touchable workers.

The tragedy begins to take its toll in the life of Velutha when he comes in contact with Ammu or rather say, when Ammu's troubled eyes and dimpled cheeks turns Velutha a transgressor as well as a victim into the secret heart of a touchable woman and a miserable victim of its punishment in the police custody. Velutha develops his weakness for Ammu or vice-versa. As a result they spend their vulgar nights on the bank of the river:

> "Clouded eyes held clouded eyes in a steady gaze and a luminous women opened herself to a luminous man. She was as wide and deep as a river in spate. He sailed on her waters. She could feel him moving deeper and deeper into her. Frantic. Frenzied. Asking to be let in further. Further. Stopped only by the shape of her. The shape of him. And when he was refused, when he had touched the deepest depths of her, with a sobbing, shuddering sigh, he drowned" (p. 337)

This illicit love affair between Velutha and Ammu was dead against the attitude of both Marxism and socialism. The Ayemenem leader, Comrade Pillai, in his heart of

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hearts, does not approve this relationship. Mr. Pillai is dissembler who has no real attachment to the principles of Marxism. He is such a leader who only knows how to grease the palm or how to feather his own nest. He is prepared to play a double game: In this critical juncture he leaves Velutha in the lurch and also executes his plan to destroy Chacko's business. The police, too, is dead against this intercaste sexual relation. When Velutha was taken to the police custody, he was severely beaten by the police such an extent that he has to die in the custody. The torture of Velutha by the police is heart rending:

> "Blood spilled from his skull like a secret. His face was swollen and his head looked like a pumpkin, too large and heavy for the slender stem it grew from. A pumpkin with a monstrous upside-down smile. Police boots stepped back from the rim of a pool of urine spreading from him, the bright bare electric bulb, reflected in it". (p. 319-20)

In short, Velutha, the God of Loss, takes no congizance of social conventions and restrictions and thus comes in conflict with history and tradition without any chance of success. On the other hand, Ammu who antagonizes her family by marginalizing herself socially, is maltreated by the governing body of the family. When her nocturnal rendezvous with Velutha is discovered and in the drowning of Sophie Mol is wrongly associated with her illicit affairs, she is asked mercilessly to leave the Ayemenem House. Estha is also sent back to his father where he develops a reticent nature. The remaining part of Ammu's life is full of despondence tinged with, fruitless day dreams. She died in the grimy room of Bharat Lodge in Alleppey where she had gone to search a job. The author observes : "She died alone. With a noisy ceiling fan for company and no Estha to lie at the back of her. She was thirty one. Not old, not young, but a viable, dieable age". (p. 161)

It is to be noted that the illicit relation between Ammu and Velutha doesn't sound shocking to a westernized urban

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sensibility. But a conventional caste-mentality particularly in India is apt to be shocked by such transgressions. Before Freud, sex was supposed to be a taboo subject. But when he propounded a highly revolutionary theory about sex and called sex the root of all our energy, literature began to come abundantly saturated with the elements of sex and illicit relations. D.H. Lawrence even went to the extent of making sex a religion. In a propos of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* he holds the view:

> The blood of man and the blood of woman are two externally different streams, they can never be mingled. Even scientifically we know it. But therefore they are the two rivers that encircle the whole of life and in marriage the circle is complete and in sex the two rivers touch and renew one another without ever commingling or confusing. We know it. It is the deepest of all communion as well as the religions in practice we know.[13]

Judged on the above observation, Roy's erotic description can't be termed pornographic. To Arundhati Roy, sex is not a private matter but a universal thing which appeals to a vast number of people. It is a part and parcel of both the life of men and women; without sex, femininity is not complete, it is meaningless. We see that Ammu in her prime of youth was forsaken by her husband and family members. Her sexual passion, the natural instinct of a youth, was not properly slaked and so she is always seen haunted by the sexual passion. Her sexual urge can well be seen in the bathroom where she sees her naked body in the mirror and gets stimulated. The author portrays her mental state in this way:

> "Ammu grew tired of their proprietory handling of her. She wanted her body back. It was her. She shrugged her children off the way a bitch shrugs of her pups when she had enough of them. She sat up and

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> twisted her hair into a knot at the nape of her neck. Then she swung her legs off the bed, walked to the window and drew back the curtains." (p. 221)

III

Rahl, Estha and Sophie Mol are the next Mombatties who develop a sense of taciturnity and isolation in a conservative framework. In other words, the brutality and persecution Ammu and Velutha underwent, is also operative against Estha and Rahel. They are treated by the family as outsiders. The first traumatic experience which the sensitive mind of Estha encounters is the misbehaviour of the 'Orangedrink Lemondrink' man in the Abhilash Talkies who forces or rather say, lulls the boy to masturbate him. Its effect is so strong that it sinks deep into the psyche of the seven years old child and haunts him throughout his life. It is a psychological truth that the mind of a child is so sensitive that when his innocence comes in contact with experience, it begins to bleed and consequently he is haunted by this nightmarish experience all through his life. And this is what we see in the life of Estha who is suffering from a sense of claustrophobia. The traumatic; experience of Estha in the theatre reminds us of the Graham Green's "The Basement Room" in which the same aged child, Philip is being harassed and haunted by the horror and cruelty of the Butler Bains:

> Again he had the sense: this is life. All his seven nursary years vibrated with the strange, the experience. His crowded busy brain was like a city, which feels the earth tremble at a distant earthquake shock. He was apprehensive, but he was happier than before.[14]

The second powerful trauma felt by the innocent twins is the emotional blackmail collectively webbed by the family, state and administration to betray the person, Velutha they loved dearly and that too, in the most pitiable

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condition. Velutha was under the police custody and was bitterly beaten by the police. Baby Kochamma, the vicious and scheming great aunt, a cantankerous spinster, persuades the twins to betray Velutha in the police station:

> "The inspector asked his question.
>
> Estha's mouth said yes.
>
> Childhood tiptoed out
>
> Silence slid like a bolt" (pp. 319-320)

In the very beginning of the novel, we see Rahel and Estha's traumatic and nightmarish experiences felt in their past life. We the reader, come to know how Estha has to lead a miserable life in Calcutta at his father's residence; how he feels a sense of isolation, 'a quite bubble floating on a sea of noise,' how at meal times when he wants something, he gets up and helps himself; and how, instead, much to the initial embarrassment of his father and stepmother, he begins to do the house work. He begins to do the works of sweeping, swabbing and all the laundry. He even learns to cook and shop for vegetables:

> "Vendors in the bazaar, sitting behind pyramids of oiled, shining vegetables, grew to recognize him and would attend to him amidst the clamouring of their other customers. They gave him rusted film cans in which to put the vegetables he picked. He never bargained. They never cheated him. When the vegetables had been weighed and paid for, they would transfer them to his red plastic shopping basket (onions at the bottom, brinjal and tomatoes on the top) and always a sprig of corriander and a fistful of green chillies for free." (p. 11)

Here Estha's taciturnity and his loneliness are the result of brutality and savagery of the Big Men—Baby Kochamma, Chacko, Mammachi, Inspector Thomas Mathew etc. It reminds us of an adolescent child, Phatik, the protagonist of the story "The Home Coming" by Rabindra

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Nath Tagore. Phatik, the village boy was sent to Calcutta at his maternal uncle's house where his aunt jeers and insults him without any rhyme or reason; where "a silent cry of the inmost heart for the mother, like the lowing of a calf in the twilight[15]" is haunted in the heart of this boy; where he dreams night after night of his village home and longs to be back there. The story teller observes:

> The cramped atmosphere of neglect in his aunt's house oppressed Phatik so much that he felt that he could hardly breath. He wanted to go out into the open country and fill his lungs and breath freely.[16]

Thus, a denial of love and security that is the lot of Ammu casts its dark shadow on the sensitive mind of the twins also. When the twins go to the Ayemenem House they become prey to morbid stiffness and dry and sapless treatment. Baby Kochamma who looks like lady Macbeth, reminds the children of their insecure position of their ostracization and sinfulness. The reason of her strictness, rigidity and hypocritical attitude goes to her own repressed sentiment, her failure in love with Father Mulligan. Estha is possessed with such a strange psychological trauma that for him using a surname is a problem. Why? Because Ammu was uncertain as to whether she should resume her parental title or continue with her husband's surname. This is why Estha writes – 'Esthapen Unknown'. We also see that during the funeral of Sophie Mol, Rahel and Esthapen, along with their mother, are made to stand separately. Even Kochu Maria, the maid servant of the house doesn't hesitate to say. "These are not your beds. This is not your house' (p. 83). Once it so happened that a stranger took Chacko to be their father. It gave much pleasure to the twins as Chacko was mistaken for their father. This really looks like abnormal in a normal family. It is psychological truth that a child who is constantly neglected by the family in comparison with another child, he invariably develops some severe kind of traumatic and terrible experience strong enough to shake the root of a newly plant.

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Rahel is also subject to the same tyranny and injustice, abuse and insult as meted out to Estha. But the basic difference between the two is that Rahel is more aggressive and active than Estha. She is a girl of rebellion like heir mother. The three notable reactions in her personality symbolize her silent protest against dogmatic and conservative outlook of the family. First she collides against other girls in the convent to see whether her breasts hurt or not. Secondly, she is seen decorating a knob of dung with flowers. This way she seems to subvert the healthy values of society by elevating what is considered low and detestable. Thirdly, she burns the hairbun of her Housemistress in order to protest against vanity and artificiality in society; it amounts to "The Rape of the Lock" by Alexander Pope.

Thus, the children of the novel become the objects of suffering and pity, contempt and hatred. Neglected both in home and outside they are just like a ship without a radar, a gang without a leader. Their separation from the very kiths and kins and even from their parents causes an indelible scar on the innocent psyche. Baby Kochamma who is herself devoid of good company and true love, has a very poor opinion about the children of the Ayemenem House. She hates the twins in the same way as the unfortunate dislike the co-unfortunate. She considered them doomed, fatherless waifs' (p. 45) To her opinion they are Half-Hindu. Hybrids whom no self-respecting Syrian Christian would ever marry (p. 45). She is also of the opinion that a married daughter had no position in her parents' home. As for divorced daughter she had no position anywhere at all (p. 45). Perhaps this is why she is seen always giving vent to her anger and contempt to Ammu and her children. On the way back to the airport we see that Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol occupy the front seat of the car while Ammu and her children were given the back seats. There were also two flasks of water boiled for Margaret Kochamma and Sophie Mol and tap water for everybody else.

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IV

Even Marxism which upholds the cause of the deserted and the haves-not is seen doing just the otherwise for what it is meant for. Inspector Mathew is going to arrest Velutha. But before the arrest he wants to be fully assured whether Velutha had any political support or whether he is operating alone. The callous Pillai not only disowns Velutha as a party worker but also doesn't refute the false allegation of abduction and rape by Baby Kochamma. This gives a chance for the corrupt police to inflict torture and savagery to the innocent Velutha. Here by this beautiful episode Arundhati Roy seems to satirize the bogey and artificiality which form the core of politics. In modern politics the thing that matters is not honesty and truth but falsehood and deception, frailty and cruelty. Politics is just like the players of the stage, the Kathakali Men' "Who act the role of virtuous soul on the stage but went home to beat their wives. Even Kunti the soft one with breasts." (p. 236)

The breach of manner and indiscipline with an element of sexual vulgarity can also be seen in the life of Comrade Pillai, "Ayemenem's egg breaker and professional omlettreer". One night Comrade Pillai is eating his supper when Velutha approaches him for some help regarding the allegation of rape and abduction. He knocks the door. Pillai sends his wife to respond to the knocker. But all of a sudden he becomes mad with sex to see his wife. He even wants to touch immediately the breasts of his wife. But the curd on his hand and the knock at the door presents an obstacle in it. Velutha, the paravan, then enters and prays earnestly to help him on the ground that he has been a loyal and devoted worker of the party throughout his life. But his requests fall flat on him. He, in a very straight-forward way, just like a corrupt and callous politician, remarks: "You should know that Party was not constituted to support worker's indiscipline in their private life (p. 287). What a great irony! A man who speaks of discipline, is himself a great breaker of discipline. A leader must be a man of good character in

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both the private and political life. But the case here is just the opposite. His wife is his own possession. But his sexual; passion bursts like volcano eruptions within a second. This is really a great breach of manner on the part of a leader who s supposed to lead the path of a number of people.

Thus, we see that *The God of Small Things* shows a patriarchal domination of a caste ridden structure, where men dominate over women, the possessed over the non-possessed, the powerful over the weak and the touchable over the untouchable. Ranga Rao, in his famous article, "The Book(er) of the Year" rightly observes:

> Roy's book is the only one I can think of among Indian novels in English which can be comprehensively described as a protest novel. It is all about atrocities against minorities, Small Things: children and youth, women and untouchable.[17]

Now the question is: Why is it that the vulnerable and the defenceless in a conservative set up are subject to abuse and insult, humiliations and derogatory remarks? Why is it that the women, the other phase of the same coin or the second wheel of the chariot of life (men being one of them) is terrorized and tyrannized by the male of society? Why is it that an innocent child devoid of the corruptions and negation of society has to bow down before the callous and cruel experience of the grown ups? The answers can be properly sought in the very nature of man — the man who is supposed to be the most dangerous animal of the world. To quote Jonathan Swift:

> I cannot but conclude the Bulk of your natives, to be the most pernicious Race of little odious vermin that Nature ever suffered to crawl upon the surface of the Earth.[18]

This proves that from time immemorial the pages of history are loaded with a number of instances, which make the male dominate over female, the rich over the poor, the

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sublime over the rough. Loren Eiseley dives deep into the depths and digs out the following gems which very well portray man's psychic structure and his lost identity in the modern commercial framework. He observes:

> The human brain is an imperfect instrument built up through long geological periods. Some of its levels of operation are more primitive and archaic than others. Our heads, modern man has learnt, may content weird and irrational shadows out of subhuman past shadows that under stress can sometimes elongate and fall darkly across the threshold of our rational lives. Man has lost the faith of the 18th century in the enlightening power of pure reason, for he has come to know that he is not a consistently reasoning animal. We have frightened ourselves with our own black nature and instead of thinking 'we are men now no beasts' and must live like men, we have eyed each other with wary suspicion and whispered in our hearts, we will trust no one. Man is evil. Man is an animal. He has come from the dark wood and the caves.[19]

V

Arundhati Roy's recent work *The Greater Common Good* deals with the same oppression and persecution which we encounter in *The God of Small Things.* It portrays beautifully the pathetic plight of a large number of sufferers of the Big Dam Projects of the state and the Government. It also shows the harsh and rugged satire on the government and the political parties; her Wordsworthian nostalgia or cry for the loss of natural scenes and sights. Here the sufferers are a number of tribal people who are forced to leave their homeland and go to live in the resettlement colonies. But truly speaking, the homes of the tribal people are not the big buildings in the crowded cities, but an open sky far from the madding crowd, saturated with age-old myths and traditions, songs and dance, culture and rites. In their letter

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to the Madhya Pradesh Chief Minister Sri Digvijay Singh, they mourn the loss of their natural surrounding:

> We have lived in the forest for generation. The forest is our moneylender and banker. In hard time we go to the forest. We build our houses from its wood. From its rushes and splints we weave screens. From the forests we make baskets and cots, ploughs and hoes and many other useful things... When we fall sick, our medicine men bring us back to health by giving us leaves, roots, bark from the forest. The forest is like our mother; we have grown up in its lap. We know how to live by suckling at her breasts.[20]

Arundhati Roy thinks that it is wrong on the part of the government to show sympathy to the tribal people in shifting their homeland to the safe places in the cities, for the site is vulnerable to the anticipated flood. But the concerned authority should bear in their mind that however poor and miserable a man's house may be, he is so much emotionally tagged to it that all through his life the memory of his birth place haunts him and compels him to come back his home. Moreover, in the villages, they feel a sense of affinity, congeniality and stability. But in the town, they are bound to suffer from a sense of claustrophobia. Andrew Marvell, a great Metaphysical poet rightly praises the solitude of the village:

> Your sacred plants, if here below
>
> Only among the plants will grow:
>
> Society is all but rude
>
> To this delicious solitude[21]

As a matter of fact, a man who leads a pastoral life is always simple, innocent and ignorant. But when he comes in contact with society, his innocence and simplicity begin to bleed. So long the tribal man lives in the lap of nature, he is nearest to goodness. The forest dweller has the opportunity to study nature in a very intimate manner, and

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the intimacy thus established with even the inanimate things is of such a profound order that it becomes possible for him to replace human society with all that is implied by the companionship of these forms of nature. Whatever wisdom these forest dwellers gather, comes from an intimate study and observation of Nature and her myriad forms. It, thus, comes to happen that what books and sermons do the people in the public life of the world of urban civilization, the trees and books and stones do to these forest men.

To sum up, Arundhai Roy has heralded a revolutionary attitude against the mal-treatment of the untouchable, the vulnerable and the down-trodden. Though these 'Mombatties' have no glass, no protection, no support to face the surge of the fast wind, yet in comparison with 'Laltain', they are not rigid and stubborn but ever ready to burn another lamp. The Mombatties of Roy's world which she calls them the God of Loss, The God of Small Things, are bound to suffer much insults and abuse, hurdles and obstacles, tyranny and injustice sometimes with cause and sometimes without any cause. The 'Laltain', on the other hand, is well fed and well protected. To quote Roy, "They were both men..., terrifying adult. They looked out at the world and never wondered how it worked, because they knew. They worked it. They were mechanics who serviced different parts of the same machine. (p. 26)

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Dalit Literature : A Critical Overview

— Dr. S. K. Paul

The historical circumstance that produced Gujarati dalit literature and locates the short story within that tradition is outlined here. A 'content analysis' of select dalit short stories is provided to acquaint the reader with some of the dominant and not-so-dominant themes recurring in them. Drawing on dalit sociology, the author highlights inequalities and anomalies of representation as they criss-cross with literary narratives and also demonstrates how dealing with them will require a readjustment of the dalit aesthetic.

Nirav Patel, the well known Gujarati dalit poet, sums up a discussion on novels by five leading Gujarati dalit novelists by stating: "The dalit experience portrayed in these novels can hardly be considered as complete. It is at best fragments of total reality. All the five novelists incidentally belong to one gender that is male and come from the predominant vankar caste which is at the top of the dalit pyramid and more backward castes like chamar and bhangi and many others are yet to articulate. One shade can not create rainbows, let hundred flowers bloom to bring the spring." Patel's observation points to gaps in the articulation and representation of dalit experiences important to fill for a dalit expression to be truly authentic. However, the very notion of authenticity is rife with

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contradictions. According to Chandraben Shrimali, a dalit and an erstwhile member of the Gujarat legislative assembly, the parameters of authenticity are the possession of male dalit writers. She perceives untouchability as a small curse of a larger, decrepit social system and focuses upon discrimination on grounds of gender rather than caste (interview with author, November 19, 2000). It is worth noting that Chandraben belongs to a relatively upper caste among the dalits and to that extent her version of the dalit problem may not be same as a woman from the bhangis, the lowest rung of the dalit ladder. These instances point to the fissures among the dalit writers regarding identity, representation and authenticity.

Unlike Marathi dalit literature, Gujarati dalit literature had a fairly delayed beginning. Unlike Marathi dalit literature, Gujarati dalit writing did not evolve out of a larger political movement against the upper caste. As a matter of fact, it grew as a response to the upper castes' virulent attacks on the reservation policy in 1981. The eventful year of 1981 and its consequent anti-reservation agitation created an environment of hostility and acrimony between upper caste Gujaratis and dalits. The very same environment was also helpful in evolving a dalit literary movement, which was up to then scattered and disorganised. In the initial years, dalit sensibility expressed itself largely through poetry, (poetry constitutes the largest part of the corpus of Gujarati dalit writing) that is replete with anguish and pain. Once the sporadic efforts found focus and organisation in the 1980s, the number of journals increased multifold and the dalit consciousness sharpened to include not just anguish, but also anger and protest against the upper castes. The 1990s witnessed a steady flow of short stories, poems, and to a lesser extent, novels. There was also a rise in animated debates about the aesthetic and ideological preoccupations of Gujarati dalit literature at large. Simultaneously, sociological and research studies on the dalits also increased, contributing thereby, to the formation of a dalit discourse in Gujarat.

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Historically speaking, the first anthology of Gujarati dalit short story made its appearance with Gujarati Dalit Varta (1987) edited by Mohan Parmar and Harish Mangalam. The editors laid down the framework for dalit sensibility and epistemology and established that 'dalit-centredness' as it obtains in some literary works of the Gandhian era does not qualify as dalit literature. They asserted that historical dalitness (that is 'dalitness' by birth) was a mark of defining dalit literature and dalit writing should necessarily contain a dalit locale, dialects, customs and the history of injustice. The introduction to the book has since then served as a manifesto of dalit short fiction. In the years that followed, short stories by dalits became a standard fare in journals such as 'Samajmitra', 'Hayati' and 'Sarvanam'. After the mid-1990s, a formal institutionalisation of dalit literature took place through dalits' very own Dalit Sabha and Dalit Sahitya Akademi. Institutions such as the Gujarat Sahitya Parishad and Gujarat Sahitya Akademi representing the mainstream Gujarati literary establishment resisted dalit writing by asking whether 'lalit' (beauty) and 'dalit' (oppressed) could coexist. In recent years, the debate has become less intense, and some dalit works have formed a part of the literary canon and syllabi in universities. All these signs point to an arrival of dalit literature. The most recent anthology of dalit short story, *Vanboti Vartao* (2000) offers no attempt at creating definitions and frameworks, and exhibits confidence, range and energy hitherto unnoticed.

It would not be an exaggeration to say that most dalit short stories are sites of anger and protest conveyed through a specific locale and language. A central incident of atrocity inflicted upon a powerless dalit by an upper caste patel/darbar, the rural locale of a 'vas' (separate quarters for untouchables) and dialects stand as hallmarks of a good, authentic dalit short story in Gujarat. With that cultural and aesthetic mapping in mind, let us look at the preoccupations of Gujarati dalit short story in the discussion that follows:

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The squalid, unhappy surrounding of an impoverished house in a vas form the physical backdrop of stories such as Dashrath Parmar's 'Paat Madhukant Kalpit's 'Kulkatha', Harish Mangalam's 'Dayan' and many others. The vas itself is not a monolithic location, it consists of several parts such as 'vankar vas' (weavers' quarter), 'rohit vas' (tanners' quarter), 'bhangi vas' (sweepers' quarter) and is thus an amalgamation of different castes, customs and languages among the dalits. However, we hardly ever come to know of any interaction amongst various communities through the stories mentioned above or through Pravin Darji's 'Maara Gaam Vachare', Joseph Macwan's 'Rotlo Najrai Gayo', Dalpat Chauhan's 'Badlo', Madhukant Kalpit's 'Kulkatha', Arvind Veghda's 'Rakhopa na Samp'. Many stories focus upon the sub-community of vankars (weavers), a few ('Jeev', 'Aaghat') deal with tanners and their 'negative right over raw hide' [Gopal Guru 2000].

Oppression to a greater or lesser extent, and anger/ hurt as its response form a psychological backdrop which runs as a feature common to all the communities. Most stories show oppression and injustice as an inevitable part of an untouchable's life. Resistance, on the whole is very rare, and if it all, it comes in some cases from women protagonists. Stories such as Arvind Veghda's 'Rakhopa na Saamp', Vasantlal Parmar's 'Ek Chhaliyun Daal ni Khatar', Hasmukh Vaghela's 'Jhaal' establish a synonymy between a dalit woman and sexual exploitation. Dalit women form a staple diet for upper caste patels or darbars and the community has no choice but to submit to a demonaic tradition. On the other hand, Haari Paar's 'Somali', Mohan Parmar's 'Thali' and Dilip Ranpura's 'Ratan' show dalit women raising their heads against rape and sexual exploitation. Apart from sexual exploitation, a very common feature is treachery or betrayal. Upper castes make use of dalit gifts for curing diseases and childbirth (Harish Mangalam's 'Utatiyo' and 'Dayan'), for winning elections (Swapnil Mehta's 'Kadaach'), but humiliate the dalits once their interests are served. A pattern of naive faith or

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oblivion on the part of a dalit and an inhuman behaviour of an upper caste feudal lord are reenacted each time with very slight modifications. The impossibility of a relationship between an upper caste and lower caste forms the motif of B Kesharshivam's 'Reti no Mahal', Keshubhai Desai's 'Boteli Vas', Mohan Parmar's 'Nakalank'. While the first two are based upon an 'oppressor and oppressed' plot, and to that extent is formulaic, 'Nakalank' is complex and sensitive. The vankar protagonist genuinely enjoys a patel's affection and trust, but the relationship gets murky because each is a product of long personal and communal history.

I now wish to turn to the not-so-dominant themes and somewhat non-formulaic situations. An interesting case in point is B Kesharshivam's 'God's Mercy', located in the turbulent times of communal riots in Gujarat. The story indicates solidarity among Muslims and dalits and establishes the Hindu feudal order as the traditional enemy of all minorities. Shailesh Parmar handles internal politics within the dalit community, the emergence of a dalit brahmin very effectively in 'Dhol ni Dandiye'. The bhangi (sweeper) protagonist, bewildered by discrimination not from an upper caste master, but a post-Mandal dalit elite rejoices when the former is rudely reminded of his low caste. Another critique of the lack of unity among the dalits is to be found in Dashrath Parmar's 'Jaat'. The educated, city-dwelling protagonist helps bridge gaps between the vankars and the rohits in order to prevent an appropriation of dalit deities by upper castes. Daniel Macwan's 'Lohini Lagni' and Dalpat Chauhan's 'Thandu Lohi' share the theme of 're-visiting,' critical outsider's perspective. In 'Thandu Lohi', the visit brings back bitter memories of humiliation, its residual effects continue when the protagonist continues to be called 'bhala no deekro' instead of by his title D B Parikh. Chandraben Shrimali (2000) entirely with the dalit ghettoes or slums in urban cities. Oppressive and poor ways of life within the community stunt its growth and worse, cause a premature death. The woman protagonist falls

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down the decrepit stairs and loses her child, the staircase (daadro) in the title serves as a metaphor for the entire community. Chandraben's story 'Dankh' brings out inconsistencies inherent in the so-called followers of Gandhi who visit the Harijan ashram but do not accept food from a Harijan. The anxiety regarding food operates with subtlety in Mavji Maheshwari's 'Safe Distance'. After settling down in an upwardly mobile urban colony, Ravjibhai takes comfort in the anonymity that city offers and rejoices in the support his brahmin neighbour extends. The neighbour discreetly avoids eating at Ravjibhai's house and maintains a 'safe distance'. The recurring theme of sexual exploitation mentioned earlier, finds a unique treatment in the hands of Jasumati Parmar, a dalit woman writer. The enemy is within - ready to trade his wife's body, out of poverty and desperation. The wife walks out, refusing to be 'Kali ni Rani', the third card in his gamble. Both Chandra Shrimali and Jasumati Parmar reinforce the double oppression of a dalit woman.

Protest literature, notes Digish Mehta has a, "a referential load: it implies a content which is specific, being grounded in history. When expressed in a literary mode, it seeks to elicit a response of a specific kind; the bias is empirical and it points, beyond the aesthetic plane, to the plane of praxis or action." The argument for privileging a 'plane of praxis' over an 'aesthetic plane' has implications for the production, reception as well assessment of dalit literature. To put it clearly, it serves not to ask whether dalit short stories discussed above satisfy literary needs, because literary parameters are inadequate for investigating dalit literature. In an introduction to the Indian short story, Mohan Ramnan talks of the multiple influences at work on the Indian short story, so that an Indian author is exposed not only to English, but also to Irish, French, Russian. He further talks of the disruption of linear strategies in the Indian short story and the prevalence of modernist features such as fantasy and magic realism. These questions when

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applied to dalit short stories, lose their significance because they assume a fully literate society. Digish Mehta reminds us: "Discussions on the distinction between 'literary' and 'non-literary' texts originating from the west, usually assume the background of a fully literate society. He adds, "A writer who seeks to give literary expression to a sense of resentment or protest against oppression would, in this context, adopt either of two courses available to him: (a) he would work within the literary tradition and would adapt or exploit, with whatever degree of success, the stylistic and other devices made available to him; and (b) he will recoil, as the dalit writer does, from the whole area marked 'literary' and will fall back on 'writing' in the raw, primary sense taking recourse to oral and non-standardized forms of speech, and to forms. The choice of the mode of writing will itself constitute a gesture of protest. Thus any literary investigation has its explanation in the social history of the dalits and therefore tools of literary assessment with regard to dalit literature become irrelevant. At the same time, admittedly, some 'absences' continue to assail this reader and in the discussion that follows an attempt will be made to seek explanations in a context other than the aesthetic one. To begin with, if protest literature is 'grounded in history', why is the treatment of an oppressor and oppressed in Gujarati dalit short stories a historical? Why is a patel or darbar in one story indistinguishable from another in a different story? Why is every dalit equally good and naive, without any mechanisms of circumvention or resistance? Is the oppressive 'other' always without and never within? Oppression, as it obtains now in Gujarati dalit short story, is defined in a unilinear fashion, its psychological and social mapping fixed. It flows from the oppressor and moves towards the oppressed. The point is what happens to state and cultural apparatus that solidifies the nature of oppression? The investigation of these questions and problems must take us into non-literary contexts. The unhistorical treatment is a re-enactment of the archetypal struggle between good and evil, central to Hindu mythology

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and many indigenous traditions. The lack of historicisation may also have to do with the imperatives of a communitarian discourse.

Depressed classes are the sum total of the untouchable castes of India. Notwithstanding, all other terms and specific names of untouchable castes will be used in this dissertation according to time, period and group usage. To begin with, there is no generic name of common acceptance that actually describes this large group of people (:1). Today they are called Untouchables, Low-castes, *Pariah, Panchama,* Outcaste Hindus, Protestant Hindus, *Adi-Drivadas,* Harijans, Scheduled Castes, etc. The Hindi word for the Depressed Classes, 'Dalit' which was first used by Sami Shardhananda is more popular than the English expression.

The Depressed Classes constitute, according to conservative estimates, about 15 per cent of the total Indian population. Even the process of approximation to the upper castes' code of conduct which M. N. Srinivas has described as Sanskritization could not help the Depressed Classes to cross the barrier of untouchability.

Depressed Classes all over India have tried to change their way, their marriage practices and their caste names but to no effect. Untouchability was made a legal offence by Parliament in 1955, nevertheless it cannot be said that it does not exists.

The Depressed Classes constitute not only a socio-cultural group but often an economic class too. A number of social studies have revealed that their women make a large number of the prostitutes. From a careful examination of information it has also been established that 90 per cent of those who die of stravation and attendant diseases belong to the Depressed Classes. Their untouchability and poverty support each other—their untouchable status accentuates their economic exploitation and their deplorable economic conditions strengthen their polluting social status (v-vi). They were not a homogeneous category. They very much

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differed from one another in their language, manners and customs. There were gradation and caste taboos among the untouchables themselves. For example, the chambhar regarded mahar as his inferior and the latter regarded the mang as still lower in the scale of humanity. They share in common certain features of poverty and degradation due to the contemputous treatment they suffered at the hands of the caste Hindus (Nath 1987:17).

The Depressed Classes were regarded as Shudras only theoretically, but for all practical purposes they were marked out as a separate and distinct community .The chamars of an Indian village who gave up beef eating and changed their caste behaviour in order to get greater respect from the higher castes received "at the best recognition, certainly not approval" (B. S. Cohn, "The Changing Status of a Depressed Caste," in McKim Marriot, ed., *Village India.* Chicago, 1958, p. 73). Jatavas of Agra who wanted to become Kshatriyas in the initial period of their upliftment soon changed to political movement. Thus under the circumstances of depressed social status and acute poverty, it was "extremely difficult" for an untouchable caste to better its position in society.

Futhermore, untouchability as a social institution was kept alive by use of brutal force; the caste Hindus insisted on enforcing the inferiority of the Depressed Classes in many ways, and if the latter tried to improve their standards of living they were cruelly persecuted... Lastly, perhaps the most effective weapon which helped in the perpetuation of the untouchability was the denial of the right to education to the masses. Only Brahmans were allowed to learn Sanskrit, the language in which the sacred books were written and the rituals were performed. The insistence on Sanskrit as the medium of education and higher thought even when the common people spoke other languages points to the policy of keeping the masses in the dark. But untouchables were still worse, they were completely outside the pale – they were not even allowed

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to approach the schools, let alone enter them. Monstrous punishments were to be imposed on the Depressed Classes if they even tried to assert their right to be educated. Mahabharata records the story of Eklavya who was refused training in archery for not having been born in the right caste. And when he acquired the art, despite no guidance, he was mutilated and incapacitated.

The structural and ideological changes which were intended to bring about annihlation of the caste system have promoted it in many ways contrary to expections, both explicit and implicit. The caste system has never been uniformly rigid/ flexible in different parts of India, and therefore, it has affected differently the other 'orders' of social life.

There is a long history of anti-upper caste movements in India, a testimony not only of the structural and ideational changes, but also of accretions, alterations and withdrawals in the caste system. Besides caste, the quality of agricultural land, infrastructure for cultivation, trade and commerce, invasions and migrations, and power determined social status and mobility. Moreover, caste-rank is/was a relative phenomenon.

A shift from the emphasis on 'cultural' criteria has made the distinctions based on economic and political power the focal theme in the study of the caste system. Surfacing of incongruities between caste and other domains shows diminution of caste as an all encompassing system and the emergence of a new nexus with economy, polity, migration and religion as interlocking sub-systems. Since agrarian relations, economic transactions and service relations have changed, the caste system too has changed a lot setting in motion the process of 'role-reversal.' A couple of studies have highlighted the role of migration, education, occupation, power, style of life, ownership, control and use of land, inter-caste feuds, competition and bargaining for higher wages as the changing criteria of status-determination and the caste-class nexus.

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Castes are 'discrete', segmentary and flexible. Class relations can be analyzed by juxtaposing them with caste, kinship, marriage and family. Studies of the nexus between caste and class have highlighted the multifaceted nature of social stratification. The structural-historical perspective in particular is found relevant for analyzing the historicity of the nexus. What is more important here is the fact that the studies of caste and class have moved away considerably from the hierarchical model of consensus, resilience and summation of roles and statuses. These studies have emphasized the emergence of 'caste free areas', downward social mobility and incompatibility of the pollution-purity principle with the entrenchment of middle and lower castes in politics and modern jobs. The increased quest for equality among the weaker sections as well as the highly aspiring middle castes and classes too overrides the traditional bases of status and power.

Both caste and class are corporate as well as individualistic entities; and the two have fixity as well as flexibility. Caste is not being replaced by class, and caste is still changing rapidly finding a place for itself in non-conventional and secular domains of social, political and economic life. Whichever caste aspires to use it for upward social mobility makes use of the 'caste idiom'. The castes which become economically and politically dominant also make use of caste for further upward social and cultural mobility. Caste is appropriated for economic and political goals in the first instance and for socio-cultural mobility afterwards. It is opined that instead of 'caste and class', it would be appropriate to refer to it as 'class and caste'. However, there is no uniform pattern of the nexus between caste and class.

In Bihar, caste is becoming a political process in which class and power are inherently embedded. Caste has changed, it has discarded some of its dysfunctional elements in today's context and has also become a 'resource', a means for some of its members. What is needed today is an

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appropriate conceptualization of this complex situation rather than an undisputed adherence to the conventional concepts of 'caste', 'class' and 'power'. Caste- class-power nexus needs to be accepted as a concept signifying the dynamics of the inter-connection between social, economic and political dimensions of India's social reality particularly since independence.

In "Caste, Class and Politics in Colonial Bengal: A Case Study of the Namasudra Movement of 1872-1937," Sekhar Bandyopadhyay showed how the Namsudras received encouragement in a struggle against high caste Hindu from the colonial rulers, not because they espoused their cause but because the British wanted to show down the upper caste Mandarins in their own interest.

In "Caste and Power in West Bengal," Ranabir Samaddar argues that the struggle of the SCs is social as well as political. The continuity of the caste and class together indicates persistence of the caste-class nexus that existed in the British period. The left-front government has not done much to break this rigid nexus as the middle peasantry has acquired a stable place in the system. Though the poor peasantry has not pauperised further during the left-front regime, but class contradictions have not sharpened further as expected during the regime of the present government under the leadership of Jyoti Basu.

"Caste-Class Situation in Rural West Bengal" by Srijnan Halder, examines how the rural middle castes have become a political force to recok with due to improvement in their economic position. But the situation in West Bengal is somewhat different from that of the neighbouring state of Bihar and some other states lie Maharasthra, Karnataka and Tamil Nadu. Despite economic betterment and some political clout, the middle castes in Bengal are not able to deentrance the upper caste from control of superior positions in professions, bureaucracy and higher educational institutions. In fact, the middle castes have not been able to come up to a level that they could challenge or compete with the near monopoly of the upper castes.

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In "Caste, Class and Landholding in the Analysis of Technology and Agricultural Production in Bihar," Shaibal Gupta finds that to a considerable extent large landholdings are still owned by the upper castes, but the modern inputs into agriculture are not properly appropriated by them, hence low productivity. This is not true about the middle castes as they have even production with smaller landholdings and lesser. Thus, social background of the people engaged in agriculture becomes one of the most significant factors in agricultural production.

In "The Orissan Society: Past Trends and Present Manifestations," Bhairabi Prasad Sahu observes that backward agriculture and aborted industrialization have helped in consolidating the pre-capitalist formation. This sort of sectoral control by the upper and middle classes has also prevented the lower classed to come up in revolt against their oppressors.

In "Caste and Kulaks in Eastern India: A Comparison of Bihar, Orissa and West Bengal" by Arjan Ghosh, the author highlights that perspective on caste and class needs reformulation keeping in view the dynamics related to these in contemporary India. Mobilisations based on the categories like 'backward classes', 'dalits', 'Bahujan Samaj', 'Dravidas', etc., suggests that caste is no longer used just as a local endogamous group or a group enjoying a given ritual ran in caste hierarchy. Ghosh argues that caste has not disappeared but rather has reconstituted itself. Caste operates as a system of social hierarchy in some backward areas, but as a means of social identity it persists throughout India. The emergence of the class of kulaks and rejuvenation of caste as the basis of social identity has harmoniously co-existed. Economic prosperity has not necessarily resulted in the rejection of caste as an evil; rather, caste is being accepted in its new forms.

"Kanshi Ram and the Bahujan Samaj Party" by Gail Omvedt shows how the BSP is a unique political innovation on the Indian political scene as it claims to bring together

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all the dalits of the country under a single banner. Initially, the party adopted an 'anti-party' stance by refusing alliances with other parties and participation in political activities. The party is also against the rethoric of the left.

"Caste, Land and Political Power in Uttar Pradesh" by Imtiaz Ahmad and N. C. Saxena seeks to examine the interplay between caste, control over land political mobilisation in rural UP . The authors observe that the urban trading and professional castes like Banias, Kayasthas and Khatris who had acquired zamindari rights in the eighteenth century, lost it due to the abolition of the zamandari system after independence. These castes entered politics and for some time they were quite strong, but their power declined with the increasing tendency of seeking support on the basis of caste. Numerically, these castes were not strong and hence lost out on the support which was simply based on education and other secular criteria. The middle castes are making a dent in politics, but are way behind compared to their counterparts in Bihar, AP and Karnataka. However, a caste or a federation of castes has become the basis of social identity for mobilisation among the power-seeking members of different castes.

In "Feudalism, Caste and Class in Rajasthan," K. L. Sharma argues that in the feudal princely states, class was determined on the one hand by feudalism and on the other by caste. After the abolition of feudalism, caste and class have come closer because of the absence of the mechanism which affected the two system in a graded manner.

Since all the members of a caste do not enjoy a similar economic position, caste and class cannot be equated. Ghanshyam Shah makes this observation in "Caste Sentiments, Class Formation and Dominance in Gujarat." The economic destinations within a given caste are not necessarily antagonistic, and the political elite of this caste generally have the support of upper economic stratum from within and outside their caste. The business class (merchants and industrialists) and rich peasants enjoy

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dominance in contemporary Gujarat. The fact is that these two classes do not hold formal positions of power and yet together they form the real power elite. The businessmen and rich peasants belong to the upper and the middle castes of Banias, Brahmins, Rajputs and Patidars. However, all these castes are differentiated internally.

"Caste and Class in Maharashtra" by Sharad Patil examins the persistence of the caste-class nexus in the resurgence of religious fundamentalism in the form of Shiv Sena, and cultist ideology in the name of neo- Buddhiasm/ Ambedkarsim.

In "Class, Caste and Ideology in Maharasthra," Rajendra Vora and Suhas Palshikar, like Sharad Patil, discuss the problem of caste-class nexus vis-a-vis ideology. The 1980s were marked by two sets of confrontations: (i) between the Hindus and the Muslims, and (ii) between the upper caste Hindus (savarnas) and the SCs/STs (dalits). The authors emphasise on the increasing Hindu militancy and the changing character of the Hindu identity in Maharashthra. They point out that caste-based conflicts must be analysed in terms of the class hierarchy in the state ...because they are deeply rooted in the material interests of the warring groups. A process of class formation has set in, cutting into the hegemony of the upper castes. The appropriation of the state and its policies for development by the upper and upper middle castes/classes has come under severe attack from the 1960s onwards." Agrarian Tensions in Rural Marathwada: A Case of the Shiv Sena," by Surendra Jondhale examines the prolonged intense agitation in 1978 against the proposal of renaming the Marathwada University after Dr. Babasaheb Ambedkar. This agitation was followed by a short lull but soon the silence was broken by an anti-reservation movement. The communal and casteist organisations have discovered a new device by attacking the dalits collectively with a view to hide/misguide the identity of the culprits. Besides this social boycott of the dalits and forcible grazing of animals on their

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fields have become a routine affair. The root cause of violence and atrocities against the dalits is their exploitation and the denial of minimum wages to them.

In "Growth, Inequities and Tensions: A Case Study of Sangli District, Maharashtra," S. P. Punalekar shows that uneven development in Sangli district has resulted in disparities in levels of production, income levels and lifestyles of the people. The district can be divided into 'developed' and underdeveloped' zones. Strategies of the state regarding growth and its pro farmer policies have immensely contributed to the development of agriculture, trade, commerce, education, etc., in one part. However, the other part remained backwards and undeveloped because of non-availability of natural endowments and recurrence of successive droughts. Even drinking water is not suitably available to many villages.

In "Caste, Class and Politics in the Tanneries of Kolhapur," Gopal Guru observes approvingly the inherence of class in caste as the big tannery-owners appropriate a great deal of surplus based on the work done by the poor tannery-workers of their own castes.

The British rule, unlike any other earlier episode in Indian history, brought with it a new economic system and technology, a new approach to social and cultural problems and ushered in radical changes in the Indian society. The transformation of an economy based on Zamindari, Mansabdari and other system into the capitalist economy, building of a network of railways, digging of canals and roads, introduction of cash crops such as indigo, tea, cotton, coffee and jute and the growth of towns and factories, severely "undermined vocational basis of caste and exclusive habits of their members[2] The economic and psychological foundations of untouchability — hereditary specialization, sacred hierarchy, mutual repulsion"[3] were eroded and broken. Thus, the Depressed Classes for the first time got an opportunity to move into new occupations and roles free from the stigma of untouchability. Besides, the

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Britishers also recruited the members of the Depressed Classes into army and police. Desperate for manpower they took into their armies any Indian who was willing to serve under them. Consequently their ranks included a large number of tribals and the Depressed Classes.

A Dalit writer, avowedly, speaks not as an individual, but as a member of a community and must therefore, avoid individuated expression. Individuated treatment makes for subtlety and complexity, but runs counter to larger needs of a community. The questions take us into the 'sociology' of dalit literature, which according to Manilal Patel (dalit critic), is a meaningful way of examining dalit literature. The section that follows turns to an examination of non/emerging sociological contexts or signs of social activity underlying Gujarati dalit short story. An application of the tool of sociology involves moving out of the physical text, and into surplus contexts of demography, class, community and gender. The first area of consideration in this regard is the demographic account of the Gujarati dalits. A large population of dalits lives in the rural parts of Gujarat and faces rampant discrimination even today. Studies of discrimination practices by Gaurang Jani (1997) reveal that entry into temples and participation in community meals still occlude the dalits. The segregation of dalits on the basis of purity-pollution ideology is very high in villages and the rise of Hindutva has further reinforced it. At the same time, the Census of 1991 reports that the rates of literacy (not education) among the dalits are equal to those in the mainstream. The democratization of education is far from complete and its recipients have been a select few, but it has created a small albeit strong dalit urban, middle class, especially the post-Mandal elite. If the striking feature of the 19th century sociology was the rise of the brahmin elite, in the 20th century it is the formation of the dalit middle class. The existence of this dalit middle class is not an unmixed blessing. It is torn by the desire to erase its humiliating past and the duty to assert it. It is a product of emancipation through education and affirmative action,

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and is therefore inserted to a certain extent, in the state polity. At the same time, social dignity and material comforts long overdue have come to it at the cost of severing ties with the past. As a consequence, the urban dalit middle class suffers from a strong crisis of identity [Yagnik 1997:35]. As an individual a dalit would much rather erase his past. The change of name, profession and assimilation into a middle class ethos are signs of that erasure. On the other hand, as a member of a community that has to maintain its 'difference' from a homogenising brahminic ethos, he must retain links with its past and identity. Dissociation from the community results in non-participation in building an infrastructure for other suffering members of the dalit community. Gopal Guru points out this difference between dalit in pursuit of modernity (individualistic, antigroupal) and dalit activists committed to intra-group unity. The burden of my argument here is that the Gujarati dalit short story rarely mirrors the dalit middle class, a very crucial segment in dalit sociology. It was mentioned earlier that the anti-reservation riots in the early 1980s formed a backdrop for the dalit literary movement. The anti-reservation agitation was essentially an urban movement focusing upon the economic implications and cut-down in employment for the upper castes. Ironically, very few dalit short stories grapple with this theme. All this points to an absence of issues concerning an urban dalit in Gujarat and begs many questions to which there cannot be clear-cut answers: Does an urban dalit elide over his 'nuclear' and urban identity in literature? Does the need to 'represent' and speak for/with his community make it imperative to affiliate with a rural, feudal history of anger? If the stuff of an urban dalit's life's not mirrored in his literary preoccupations, what gives rise to that dichotomy and what sustains it? These questions are vexing and wrestling with them is a painful process. The sociological shift from rural to urban has attendant problems of identity which is fraught with contradictions — mirroring the urban sociology in Gujarati

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dalit literature perhaps also means resolving the contradictions. On the other hand, Marathi dalit short story does reflect this 'ambivalent crisis of identity in a middle class dalit', Gujarati dalit short story has yet to do so.

Apart from the dalit urban middle class, the story of Gujarati dalit short story is that of many absences. It suffers from lop-sided representation, since only a couple of dalit communities 'represent' a much larger and heterogenous mix of dalit sub-communities. The agency of representation rests chiefly with the vankar community which forms about 50 per cent of the entire dalit population in Gujarat. To a lesser extent, the community of garodas also figures in literary and political movement. It is important to historicise briefly the formation of the vankar community in order to perceive the contexts that make representation possible. The vankars in addition to being a majority, have had the benefits of education and social mobility. Weavers by profession, they were the first one to move from a tradition-bound village life to the textile mills of Ahmedabad during the terrible drought of 1900, known as the 'chhapaniyo dukaal'. Not all forms of migration led to a better and improved quality of life and a large number spent their lives in unhygienic urban ghettoes/chawls. At the same time, it has caused over generations, a background of life in the cities and distance from feudal order of the villages. Add to this the fact that conversion to Christianity is also the highest among the vankars [Ramanathan 2000:64]. The benefits of education and an alternative 'caste-free' religion has given the Gujarati vankars confidence, faith and an improved quality of life.

Ramanathan notes that, "From the psychological point of view, conversion has divergent effects. When adoption of a new religion provides satisfaction of material and psychic needs which affiliation to the older religion could not give, it seems to strengthen faith, and consequently, identity" [Ramanathan 2000:65]. The largest number of Gujarati dalit authors is from the vankar community of which some are

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Christians. At this point it must be noted that Christian dalit authors map their literary worlds as pre-Christian, Hindu ones. With the exception of Joseph Macwan, we do not find any Christian characters or ways of life being explored in Gujarati dalit short story. Once again, this can be put down to a dalit author's imperative to affiliate with a communal identity rather than a religious one in order to strengthen the dalit movement. To come back to the question of representation, we notice preponderance of a couple of communities for in dalit literature and for various historical reasons, other communities fall outside the fold of representation. The well known writer Joseph Macwan notes that "the tooris, vaghris, ravalias have all suffered, just as we have, if not more. We must encourage them to write, and till they do, we must speak for them." Discrimination and untouchability form the bottom-line of all dalit expressions, at the same the degree and specificities differ and these do not get reflected in the dalit short stories today. The toories and tagaras are conspicuous by their absence, since the fruits of education and literature are still far-fetched dreams for them. On the other hand, education and consequent agency of representation alone is not likely to result in uniformity of response to the dalit question. The internal hierarchies within the dalit system also constitute an uncharted terrain as far as dalit literature is concerned.

Another problematic absence in the corpus of Gujarati dalit short story is that of women writers. The two women writers mentioned earlier, Chandraben Shrimali and Jasumati Parmar are both from the subcommunities of garoda (the 'upper most' layer of brahmins among dalits) and vankar respectively. This in itself explains their presence and the absence of many others who could have come from less privileged communities. The double burden of being a woman and an untouchable creates its own specific version of oppression, the depiction of which is missing in the corpus of stories today. The violence within a family, the structures of patriarchy, the responses of dalit men to normative codes of brahminism are constantly papered over by male voices,

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thereby creating a further imbalance of representation. The apparatus of selecting, printing, publishing, disseminating also lie with the male dalit writers and Chandraben perceives patriarchy within the system as a major stumbling block.

It can be concluded from the foregoing that the literary-social-political body of dalit short stories is rife with inequalities and anomalies of representation. There are a number of 'absences' and explanations to those can be sought not in the 'aesthetics vs, ideology' paradigm but in social history. As decades move, different emphases must take over in Gujarati dalit short story and the paradigm of 'oppressor vs oppressed' will have to be shed to accommodate lived realities. This may also lead to a redefinition and readjustment of the dalit aesthetic. After all, will a dalit writer be able to employ a rural locale and dialect in order to communicate a more urban ethos? Will the emerging generations of the urban dalit have an access to the community life? On the other hand, is the elision of his contemporary present an indication of a dalit writer's refusal to relocate his identity in a different time and place and consequently, reshape the aesthetic? When faced with dominant literary parameters of a Brahminic culture, is it not imperative for a dalit writer to assert himself through his specific locale and language? These questions have no clear-cut answers, but constitute further areas of reflection in Dalit literature.

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Narendra Jadhav's *Outcaste : A Memoir*: A Saga of Positive Search for Excellence

— Satish Barbuddhe

The community of humankind is a beautiful living organism in which we all have a place and which is reflected in all of us. Every individual belongs to some form of society, and every level of society has a place in the make up of individuals. You are a member of a family; you are also a member of a culture. The influence of culture is both from within and without. A society is an organization of people and a culture is their customs which are usually interdependent and mutually supportive. They form a fairly coherent pattern.

Development of personality is important for awareness of the value of life. As one's personality flowers out, so also does one's viewpoint of life. Values in life arises out of one's desire to live usefully. The most common one is the desire to live for oneself. The parents of Narendra Jadhav decided to live for their children. Narendra Jadhav's 'Outcaste - A 'Memoir' (titled 'Untouchables' in some editions) narrates how his parents struggled hard against the society and the hostile surroundings, while bringing up Narendra and his siblings.

Narendra Jadhav dedicated 'Outcaste - A Memoir' to the vision of the blind Grandma, the genius of his father

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who never went to school and to Sonu, his mother, who killed her hunger, only to keep them alive and to all those anonymous men and women everywhere in the world who stood up for human rights. The book is a multi-layered narration of the under-privileged who suffered at the hands of the privileged for centuries together. The towering ambition of man keeps on moving upwards. He experiences only the urge to reach his goal. Narendra Jadhav is at present the Vice-Chancellor of Pune University. His 'Outcaste - A Memoir' is a wonderful narrative, which describes how his near-illiterate parents raised their six children to become successful human beings. Narendra Jadhav, who belongs to the Mahar Caste, was chosen as the best international student at Indiana University, USA, where he did his Ph.D. in the early 1980s. In an interview with *Reader's Digest*, he expressed his views about the unfortunate fellow beings.

> "You know the Hans Christian Andersen story of the ugly duckling? Unfortunately, in our hierarchical society there are millions of swans who, because they don't get a chance, believe they are ugly ducklings and waste their lives."[1]

Even as the HRD ministry is all prepared to extend OBC quota, the official data of a central university revealing high dropout rates among SC and ST school children, unravels the underbelly of reservations. While 73.24% class X SC students called it quits in 03-04, the figure for STs was even worse at 79.25%. Revealed in the latest educational statistics released by the HRD ministry, the pattern highlights failure of the Centre to ensure minimum quality of education to Dalits after a decade and half of quota raj. The number of dropouts increases in higher classes, as it is 36.56% among SC kids studying in the class I-V group, and it goes up to 59.42% till class VIII. The picture is as grim for dropout rates of ST students from Class I-V which is 48.93% and 70.05% till class VIII.

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With the livelihood of a majority of the SC and ST population based on agriculture, children are roped in for farming after they attain the age of 10-12, thus there are higher dropouts after class V. Morever, three months - April, July and December are agriculturally and academically important as well.

Dr. Narendra Jadhav thinks that we should not deprive the children of opportunities at the higher education level because of high dropouts at the school level. We must find a solution to decrease the dropout rate. Neither of Jadhav's parents went to school (his father taught himself to read basic Marathi) but they knew the importance of education. They sent their children to Chhabildas Boys' High school. The medium of instruction was Marathi.

> "I used to sit in a corner like a sacred rat. I studied Sanskrit because this was denied to all my forefathers."[2]

Narendra Jadhav expresses his personal agony through these words. His tone may seems to be loud, but his protest is true. He believes that Dalit literature is a literature of genuine protest. His mode of thinking is different from other Dalit writers. Some criticises Dalit literature as immature. Narendra Jadhav's book has positive contents and poetic quality. He scored 93% marks in Sanskrit, but missed the Jagannath Shankarshet scholarship by 1 mark. Everyone was surprised, when they saw his score in Sanskrit. His Sanskrit teacher thought that, the scorer's name might be Bhave? Bapat? Phadke or Gokhale? Jadhav was a hardworker. He had self-confidence. His Sanskrit teacher sent a word for him, but he didn't go to meet the teacher. He wanted to avoid the conflict. T.S. Eliot has said that "The passions of a poem are somehow related to the passions of the society that produces it." Narendra Jadhao praises the teacher by saying....

> ".... he was a good teacher, he never discriminated - but that was the mindset you develop when you grow up in the kind of setting I did."[3]

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Narendra Jadhav believes in the maxim 'Do not wait to strike until the iron is hot; but make it hot by striking.' It's the courage of Narendra Jadhav that counted, as he fully knew that success is never final and failure never fatal.

Damodar Runjaji Jadhav and his wife Sonu are the main characters of the 'Outcaste—A memoir Damu is the protagonist of the story, whose protest against the injustice is a unique one. His father was against the word 'Harijan' "If Harijans are the people of God, who are the other people? The devil's?" He used to ask. One cannot be genuinely human unless one has become the bearer of a culture and education in its widest sense must produce 'a determinate citizen type.' His father attended a meeting addressed by Dr. B.R. Ambedkar which moved him so much that he decided to spread the message of Dr. Ambedkar—"Educate, unite and agitate.' His father and mother were converted to Buddhism in 1956, when Dr. Ambedkar gave a call to join Buddhism.

Damu insisted that his children should call him 'baap' instead of 'Baba' or any other name. The word 'baap' is more comfortable for Damu than 'Baba'. He doesn't like the polite language.

> "Arre, call a spade a spade...language when spoken should come alive with meaning; It should have flavour .... your polite, bland language is as insipid as boiled potatoes."[4]

Damu doesn't use sophisticated language, nor doesn't he expects the same from his children. He is against the decorative, ornamental uses in language of daily use.

The entire humanity may be categorised into three groups. In the first group are those who follow the life of worldly mindedness (pravritimarga). In the second group are those who follow the path of renunciation (nivrithimarga) and the third one, who is the real need of the hour, are those who serve humanity, leading them on the spiritual path. (Bhaktimarga). In spite of the advance

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made in science, we do not find a resurgence of religion, which clearly proves the need for religion. Damu's conversion to Buddhism along with his wife Sonu is a major event in his life.

Buddha says : Look into your heart. Follow your nature. He is not saying to follow scriptures. He is not saying to follow him. Damodar Jadhav and his wife fully understand this. In order to encourage the childrens' study, his father keeps a picture of Saraswati in the house. Saraswati is a symbol of wisdom. He knows that knowledge is far more valuable than money. Damodar Jadhav firmly believes that knowledge can be used to make money but it cannot really be purchased with money; it is acquired by individual effort. Worldly wealth is limited; knowledge is unlimited. Being highly qualified Damu's all children are well settled in life. This is the result of collective efforts of Damu and Sonubai. Damu often teases her.

> "Our engine is good and dependable no doubt... but it makes a lot of noise !"[5]

Damu has full respect for his wife. Though Sonubai's range of experiences is very limited, Damu never underestimates her. Both of them know that worldly pleasures are initially attractive but later wear off rapidly. They follow the spiritual path and lead their children to scale the height of excellence. They urge their children to develop a happy state of mind.

Damu's active participation in the Mahad's Chavdaar Tank March indicates his inclination towards the Dalit Liberation Movement. Damu along with his wife Sonu takes part in the agitation of Kala Ram Temple at Nasik. Highly educated Narendra visits the Vithoba Temple at Pandharpur. He is well received by the high caste priests. He narrates the incident in a most touchy way.

> "It was then that a tall boulder right outside the temple come into focus. Before I knew what I was doing, I had left the priests and rushed towards the boulder. I hugged it

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> hard, Prostrated before it and clasped it, its ragged edges bruising my palms, as startled onlookers stood aghast."[6]

This boulder is the boundary beyond which the untouchables are not allowed to step further. The book is full of personal memories of Narendra Jadhav. Consciously or unconsciously all seem to maintain a list of priorities in life. The human psyche tends to play a major role in determination of priorities. Narendra Jadhav's priorities in life are decided by his parents. They fully know that their children will emerge as the "raajhans" (swans) in their lives. Jadhav's children face the problems with the aspirations to overcome them. They follow the maxim 'stop thinking about the past and live in the present'. They also know that all our negative thoughts are the result of our clinging to the past.

'Every generation laughts at the old fashions, but follows religiously the new' is the observation of Henry David Thoreau. Narendra Jadhav reaches to such a well-deserved, place, that the upper caste compliment him for his success. Narendra Jadhav knows that life is all about moving on. Forget what happened in the past and move on. Even if the past was very joyous, do not allow it to become the measure for your future. Ms. Vandana Pathak observes that....

> "Some of these Marathi Dalit autobiographies have been worst criticized for obscene, vulgar depictions. The same charge can never be levied against. 'Outcaste' A 'Memoir'. All excesses noticeable in other Dalit self narratives like use of slander, superstitions, drunken stupor and brawls do not mar the cohesiveness of this well knit narrative."[7]

Emotions full of rage and anger are expressed with restraint. Family life depends upon the community which gives direct and immediate support. Though Damu, the protagonist has a bitter experience, while bringing up the

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children, he controls himself while narrating these experiences. One villager calls Narendra 'Damu Mahar's Son' while others use a dignified language. Dr. Amar Nath Prasad has rightly opines:

> "Yes, even a dalit or an untouchable can become an engineer or a doctor or a lawyer or a professor if he is given proper education and proper facilities. God never makes any difference between a touchable and an untouchable; between the poor and the rich; between the rough and the sublime. The minds of all men are almost equal."[8]

Narendra Jadhav did his Ph.D. in the early 1980s. He is a prolific writer in both Marathi and English. 'Outcaste' (titled 'Untouchables' in some editions) has been translated into Hindi, Tamil, Kannada, French, Spanish, Korean and other languages. This book is a saga of positive search for excellence of a person who spent his childhood in the slums of Mumbai. Narendra Jadhav remembers the early days.

"Survival of the fittest was the rule in the slums where I grew up. I was a pretty good fighter, so I wanted to be a dada - a gangster!"[9]

He is excellent in his studies and soon outshines leaving everyone spellbound. There is no sign of deep resentment and use of words depicting hatred for the society. The attitude of Damu is sober though he thinks that "Whatever heights a man might scale, his caste is never cast off; it remains an inseparable part of his identify."[10] The book concludes on a note of self-realization that in modern India dignity rests in the minds and hearts of the people. The finest ideas lift up your spirit and elevate the level of awareness and conscience and produce happiness.

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Gujarati Dalit Novel *Shosh* : A Study in Connection with Psychodynamics of Women

— *M.B. Gaijan*

The Universal Declaration of Human Rights has remained the boon to mankind. That gave new political and social thinking to human civilization. In India, democratic political system materialized the concepts of equality among all beings. But Indian society is the society of inequality. It is divided among castes, sub-castes. Diversity is Indian identity. Lower castes suffer social injustice by the upper castes. They are not only the sufferers but women are the bigger victimized group. They suffer at homes and outside their homes. All castes women are sufferers.

Postmodern era, globally, gave a voice to all unheard agonies, sighs and tears of women through literature. In India, regional literatures - mainstream and marginalized stream - are also influenced by the new literary trend. As a result a multicoloured art is created. Marginalized Dalit writings are now also a multicoloured art. For this paper, Gujarati Dalit novel *Shosh* is considered. It is awarded *Sister Nivedita First Prize* for 2004 by Gujarati Sahitay Parishad. The novel is by the young Dalit writer Daxa Damodara. This is her first novel and the first Dalit novel by Dalit woman author.

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The novel is a pathetic story of a female right from her birth. The novel is divided into two parts. The writer has not given any title to the parts, perhaps, she wants to present the vacuum of the mind of Madhavi, the main character of the novel. About abnormal status of mind T E Shanmugam writes: "The psychodynamic model considers the causes of abnormality as psychological and as being rooted in the unconscious."[1] The novel presents "dynamic interplay of psychological process" of Madhavi.

By nature, woman wants love wholeheartedly, at her childhood from her parents and after marriage from her husband. If she gets at both the places, she does not demand the Paradise. But this does not happen ever. Her longing remains unnoticed, uncared and consequences, her thirst becomes her life. She lives in mirage. It becomes reality to her. Psycho-disturbances become natural to her.

The first part of the novel presents how Madhavi becomes victim of abnormality. Her suffering begins as she released from mother's womb and at her parents' home. She is not from the Dalit caste but a high caste Hindu whose father is a reputed C.A. She is the second female child of her parents. Her father is not happy with her arrival on the earth. Compromisingly he has to accept her birth. Her father wished a male child and she is born, thus right from the beginning she is unwanted child. Her father is from high caste and well educated, socially reputed, too. But *Madhavi* feels he pretentiously says many times; "If proper education and cultural trainings are provided then even a daughter can standby the parents."[3] In response to this, Madhavi knows truth and angrily, disturbed within herself;

> "You are telling lie...a daughter and a son makes tremendous change, particularly to you. But why? Why do not you pour your love on us...Why you have kept the untouched love for the son, who is not yet born! We do not want your compassion, your taking care for us...why don't you love us

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> wholeheartedly? We want your love Papa...your love.... if you can not give it to us, take away your compassion, sympathy for us."[4]

Her father is visibly modern. He speaks English fluently, also involves in the recitations Shloka of *Geeta.* He does regularly yoga and exercise, sometimes he puts on cloak and Dhoti, sometimes coat, pant and necktie. This indicates his modernized traditionalism.

Madhavi wants love from her father but she couldn't get. She consciously tries to please her father by being obedient. Her unsatisfied desire forces her to fascinate towards arts. Her elder sister secretly got inter-caste marriage and ran away, for that Madhavi suffers punishment. Her father declares that run away daughter is dead for them.

During her school days, in 10+2, she comes in contact with a Dalit boy Rajendra Makawana who is an average student. She is fascinated towards him. She thinks her poems she will show to him and he would appreciate them. But unfortunately that comes in her father's hand. And all her long efforts to please her father go in vain. As a dignified dictator he says; "Take care, this sort of writing should not come again. Pay concentration on only study. Remember it always."[5] And further he expects from her "Will you be a C. A. and sit in my office?"[6] She also thinks about her father's status and Rajendra's lower caste; "..where my father is....where our cultured family is and there this lower caste Rajendra is..shit."[7] Rajendra's painting impressed her lot and Rajendra also gives sometimes comment on Madhavi's painting. Madhavi feels that only by painting she expresses her love but it is also banned by her father.

She could pass her 10+2 examination with passing marks and she has to join First Year B.A. At the admission time her father throws the admission form to her. She feels her heart is broken; "She feels continuously from within

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somebody is weeping. Weeping secretly...after somebody's death."[8] She feels anxiety because she could not satisfy her father's expectations. She could not tolerate this stage long. She is torn and becomes an abnormal. She wants love which is only Utopia for her. Her father banned her creativity and she feels suffocated. A young woman has no right to live as a human being. Her desire to get love from her father is never materialized. Here, the picture is not exaggerating but real in Indian society. Her misery and helplessness she can not express to any, within self she cries;

> "I want to cry somebody's name....but name I forgot....I want to cry from the depth of my heart on somebody's name....thirst stuck to my throat., who knows since how many ages! ....even breathing suffocates me...Very helpless I become. Where I should go? My inner self is dry and wants love."[9]

Her love for art and for Rajendra is finished because of her father's love. Madhavi is extremely disturbed. It is easy to understand her situation. Madhavi's mother has no voice in her own home. But mother sometimes pacifies her. Madhavi's condition is like this; "Madhavi's psycho-world was broken to pieces."[10]

Her abnormal psycho-world forced her to paint a portrait of woman who is 'thirsty.' Her thirst is the thirst for human love. Unconsciously she is fascinated towards Kutch, the land swallowed up the once highly advanced civilization but at present known as the land of calamities and deserted zone. It is highly symbolized matter like Madhavi's heart which has untouched, unknown longing to be known and loved. Her father has created the atmosphere at home where she can be nothing but a neurotic and schizophrenic. When psychiatrist advised painting as a therapy then her father allowed her to use paint, brush and paper to the young daughter.

What else the parents do for the abnormal young daughter, except her wedding and passing the problem to

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the young man! When she is a second year student of B.A. her father arranges her marriage. She is neither mature nor healthy when she is married. Purandar, the football player, well-exercised young man working in a private firm as an assistant manager then a manager, becomes her life partner in the arranged marriage. He is highly influenced by his paternal aunt - a widow from her childhood - who lives with them. She also creates the atmosphere in Purandar's home which pains Madhavi. Purandar's mother is a bed-ridden patient. She has no voice in her own home. But she shows feelings for Madhavi. Purandar's child-widow aunt controls the house.

In married life husband-wife's relationship is neither spiritual nor Platonic but a social and secular. Love is natural and to marry is social. Madhavi becomes sandwich between both. She wants that Purandar should reach to the core of her heart. He should love her profoundly, wholeheartedly. But Purandar is an average husband. He loves more her body then her 'inner self, Hot arguments sometimes take place between husband and wife;

> "You are so hot Madhu!"
>
> "Beyond the body, see sometimes inside, volcano is burning in the bosom!"
>
> "Is our relationship only limited up to body...? Have you ever thought of my emptiness took place after our bodily-union? Something eternal... .boundless I want Purandar...."
>
> "Relation establishes with only body, Madhu! I have selected you and you choose me, what else we have seen?"
>
> "Yes, body is there but beyond the body there is something that is love. The body is like a boat, a boat is mere a means, those who believe the boat is the ultimate goal they are ignorant!"
>
> "What you are calling body, Madhu! that is sex in other words. And love is always based

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> on sex – this is the fact those who hesitate to accept it they are hypocrites. What is to go beyond? If there is a pleasure in sailing then why the sailing be not the goal?"
>
> "Your body-possessive attitudes made the shallow meaning of love."[11]

She does not hate sex but does not want only sex from her husband. Further she says; "Love and sex are the two sides of the same coin which can never be one."[12]

Madhavi could raise little her voice before her husband because she offers her body to her husband. With pain she says; "after marriage I realized the property may be immensely valuable but is for use".[13] She indirectly says to her husband, she is merely his property and he uses it. She criticizes husband-wife's only sex relationship.

Purandar could not understand her, he calls her a whimsical. Gradually she becomes neurotic, schizophrenic. Yet she lives with her husband. They have a son, Rahul. Meanwhile in the city where they are living Rajendra comes as the celebrated painter who dedicated his life for painting. Madhavi's unsatisfied fascination for Rajendra again disturbs her. Her fascination for him is Platonic. As earlier, before her marriage, she was painting, Purandar allows her painting too. That is he who brought Madhavi near to Rajendra and that is he who doubts about the relationship of Rajendra and his wife. About woman's safety when Purandar says to Madhavi, she could not tolerate any more. She furiously and satirically says;

> "Woman's safety was in when she was infanticide in boiling milk, and now, when she is foeticide in the womb. Then, the four walls are for her to become the victim of the lust of brother-in-law or father-in-law. Four walls are for the thing which is done with other woman is known as the adulteration, unwillingly if it is done that is known as the rape but the same deed husband does with the right in the four walls."[14]

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Madhavi's fascination for Rajendra is not sensual but platonic. He is a well-wisher of her, a friend and guide to her.

Purandar warns frequently his wife to give divorce and make her free. But she does not want to be free. She wants that at least her husband should know her. She stops to paint to please her husband. She becomes happy when Rahul paints. When conflict becomes extreme she gradually collapses from within. She loves her son wholeheartedly but she is torn. Her husband continuously tortures her by saying that Rajendra as a loose moral person.

Rajendra could understand Madhavi's helplessness. Then Rajendra says that he is leaving the city for ever, she could not bear the shock. It is not Rajendra's leaving that pains her but her husband's doubts are strengthened that pain her a lot. Actually Rajendra has dedicated his life for *"Jala Sanchaya Abhiya'* (Water Storage Campaign) in Gujarat and remained unmarried. Thus he does work for welfare of all and environment. At the end of the first part Madhavi again becomes abnormal, rather she is made abnormal.

She loves poetry and painting because no males—her father and her husband—love her from the bottom of their hearts. She loves her son but herself she is disturbed. The first part of the novel ends with the extreme conflict between husband and wife.

II

The second part of the novel presents the events taking place in Kutch. To set compromise with Madhavi and to please her, Purandar proposes to go to Kutch. With the thought of Kutch, Madhavi becomes excited and disturbed. Madhavi thinks, Purandar does not bring her to Kutch out of his love, but, perhaps, the property of her father is the source to soften him. Right from her childhood on the name of Kutch she disturbs. She laments silently within herself;

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"But...I want to weep."

"Too much I want to weep."

"That much I want to weep its echo can be heard in the sky."

"Since how long time I have suppressed the suffocation in my bosom!"

"I want to weep!"

"But can I not weep."

"I.... I am so I can not weep."

"I....I am not."[15]

Gradually she is going out of her control;

'I do not know Purandar...! what happens to me?"

"Why I feel something strange..!"[16]

Her extreme abnormality puts her in a pitiable condition when she asks to herself;

Who Am I?"

"Where Am I?"[17]

She gradually goes out of her mind. This part of the novel presents Madhavi's extremely disturbed psycho-world than the real world of Kutch.

In Kutch, they go to Bhadreswar as Madhavi wished. Bhadreswar is the place of Jains' pilgrimage. Jain temples are there. In Bhadreswar she with her family goes to see the abandoned step-well. It was built by Dudo Shah, a Dalit ship-owner of middle age. He was a rich merchant whose ships went abroad for selling goods. During the time of *Vikram Savant* 1313-1315 Kutch became the victim of drought. People lost their lives without a drop of water. At that time Dudo Shah had built the step-well for the Untouchables. In the beginning Dudo Shah could not complete the step-well because his ships had not retuned to shore. So it was not possible to build the step-well but Desal, the blooming Dalit youth who sacrificed his life and before that he gave money to Dudo Shah to complete the step-well.

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When Madhavi sees the step-well the tragic reality of Dalits' suffering of that time emerges before her eyes and she slips in past, she says;

> "See ...mad laughter of the whirlwind.. see... you see., if they have not wrapped themselves in the torn clothes they would not be identified as human being .. those peoples from the outskirt ghettos of the village.."[18]

For drinking water, the Untouchables were waiting for somebody's mercy. This story is lively created by the writer. Gradually Madhavi slips in past. She is tossed between real world and her own psycho-world.

The author has presented the inter-caste love story of Desal and Rajal, a maid from Royal class. The story is like this, the prince of Bhadreswar goes to propose his wedding with Rajal. But Rajal is a brave and poetess by heart refuses the proposal. The prince feels insulted and decides to teach her lesson. So he sends Desal as the poet and hero. It is the deadly bond between the prince and Desal. Desal accepts the challenge and in exchange to cheat Rajal he gets money from the prince which he gives to Dudo Shah to complete the unfinished construction of the step-well.

Madhavi gradually resembles herself with Rajal. Madly she behaves. It is her schizophrenic stage. Her husband tries to make her normal but she is out of her self. She becomes more pitiable. Her husband tries to know who these Desal and Rajal are. But she could not explain anything because of her abnormal stage.

She becomes victim of the extreme schizophrenia. She hears and speaks the Kutchi dialogues taking place between Rajal and Desal. On other hand, both, Purandar and their son Rahul are shocked. Mother's abnormal behaviour Rahul could not bear. He cries out; "What happens to you Mama?"[19] But Madhavi thinks she is Rajal.

According to the story Rajal loves Desal. But when she knows about his lower caste, she rejects his love and

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complains to be deceived. Death punishment is announced. Rajal can not tolerate it. Actually she loves Desal from the bottom of her heart, so she does not want him to behead. And Desal is not identified as Dalit but he does not want to cheat Rajal any long so he declares the truth to Rajal. Later on Rajal feels guilty for Desal's punishment.

Tossed between two worlds Madhavi gradually becomes more pitiable, her schizophrenia turns into paranoia.[20]

Madhavi alone secretly goes to Kanthakot, the fourteenth century built fort situated on the top of hill by Vaghela dynasty of Gujarat, now left deserted. She feels Rajal belongs to Kanthakot, so she goes there. In Kanthakot how Desal was beheaded that is presented. As Rajal, Madhavi feels guilty for doing injustice to Desal. Here, she is alone and paranoid. Madly she runs to see Desal for last. She collapses, at the critical time Purandar reaches there and saves her. The dialogues taking place between husband and wife represent Madhavi's severe mental disorder;

> "(Madhavi) Desal ... here somewhere..."
>
> (Purandar) Madhavi please let's go down
> where
>
> Rahul is."
>
> "Where is Desal?"
>
> "Madhavi, do you know what are you doing?
> I do
>
> not understand..."
>
> "I know everything"
>
> "Whole equation of my life is changed! I...."
>
> "Madhavi you are running after the mirage.
> Control
>
> your self."
>
> "If it is a mirage or reality, it pacifies me a
> lot. I
>
> want to go, in that mirage... I want to go to
>
> Desal."[21]

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Thus she is lost in herself. Rahul could not bear strange behaviour of his mother. He weeps. His eyes are swollen because of weeping. Purandar could not bear any long. He slaps her. From the depth of herself 'Rahul' she hears. Rahul also asks her; "Where have you gone Mama".[22] Before she becomes normal Madhavi slips in comma. Novel ends here.

Madhavi's unconscious mind is not ready to go away from Rajendra. When her husband tries to removes her form him, she finds Rajendra in Desal, who was poet and genuine lover of Rajal. She feels she is Rajal. Second part of the novel is the climax of the Madhavi's abnormality.

The novel is variously evaluated. Professor J.V.Dave writes that the novel is lyrical, further he remarks;

> "True to the title the images indicating thirst, dominate the work, which is surrealistic in technique...There is nowhere a revengeful Dalit anger anywhere although the author is a Dalit lady. But there is evidently a humanist sense of outrage at unnecessary and avoidable pain, which the individuals in an unjust, irrational and insensitive social order, have to suffer...
> Its message is mutely suggested, and not said out aloud. Aesthetic justice, which is the proper name of 'poetic justice', rules here. The work is a tragedy with a positive note, and not a piece of pessimism."

Bhalchandra Jani notes; "In whole novel, in every line the thirst of feeling is expressed."[24] Harish Mangalam writes;

> "*'Shosh'* creates various interpretations. It represents the thirst caused by painful social injustice, cruelty, social hierarchy, untouchability and exploitation of women and Dalits, like a thirsty dry earth of Kutch, the thirst of Madhavi's heart, the thirst stuck to the throats of Madhavi and Rajal

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> for their beloved and many other interpretations are emerging."[25]

Dr. Pathik Paramar observes;

> "In our time woman's social status is changed but in traditional family structure still there is no total change in bring up of male-female child. Benefits what a son gets, daughter does not get. There is partiality in the rules. Because of the longing for male-child, female foeticide before the birth. In family life woman has to suffer more."[26]

Whole novel is based on the activities of Madhavi's conscious and unconscious mind. Madhavi is not like Ibsen's Nora who is very conscious about her identity. Nora does not take care even to see the children when she is leaving her home but here, Rahul brings her to normal life. Madhavi's protest is not only feminist but humanist. She wants to live as human being.

The novel has other sub-themes. Dalit issue it presents but in a different way. Here Dalits are not degraded. Generally it is believed the Dalit writing is merely a cry of Dalits protest. This novel is quite different from that opinion. It is the genuine appeal to human beings to remove all social inequality based on sex or caste. Here Dalits do not protest against non-Dalits' cruelty but non-Dalit protagonist protests against non-Dalits' cruelty on Dalits.

Domestic violence on women, woman's situation between womanhood and motherhood are also aesthetically presented. The novel is poetry in prose. The style is musical, words carry apt and appropriate picture of Madhavi's mind. It also brings live picture of Kutch before the eyes of readers. The work is not only piece of art but it helps to understand woman's mind for better harmony of family and then society.

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Contributors

1. **Dr. Darshana Trivedi** is a Reader in the Dept. of English, School of Languages, Gujarat University, Ahmedabad. Her areas of specialization are Comparative Literature, Translation and Indian Writing in English. She has translated and edited *Silver Lining* (An Anthology of Gujarati Dalit Poetry), *Tongues of Fire* (An Anthology of Gujarati' Dalit Short Stories) and *Celebration of Divinity* jointly with Rupalee Burke. Recently she has published a Gujarati novel *Pankhar ni bik na Batao.*

2. **Prof. B. S. Nimavat** heads the Department of English, Shri V. D. K. Arts & M. R. S. Commerce College, Savar Kundla. He has to his credit more than a dozen standard books published both in English and Gujarati languages. He also wrote articles, poems and translated poetry and short stories from English into Gujarati and vice-versa. He gave more than 10 radio talks on various subjects. He worked as an examiner with Michigan Language Battery, Michigan University, Ann Arbor, U. S. A. He was also invited to Poets Meet at Madras, Seoul (Korea) and the U. S. A.

3. **Dr. S. K. Paul,** a bilingual poet and author, is Reader in the P. G. Department of English at R. D. S. College, Muzaffarpur under B. R. A. Bihar University. He has authored a book, *George Bernard Shaw: A Study of His Ideas and Ideology* and contributed a number of scholarly papers to different books and journals, magazines and newspapers. Some of his poems have

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also found a place in an International anthology of poems. He has co-authored a book "Recritiquing R.N. Tagore" with Dr. Amar Nath Prasad.

4. **Dr. Anita Ghosh** teaches English at R. D. S. College, B. R. A. Bihar University, Muzaffarpur (Bihar). She has authored a book on I. A. Richards and has contributed several scholarly articles to different books and journals. She has also participated and read papers in different National and International seminars and conferences.

5. **MS. Dronamraju Padmarani** belongs to Visakhapatnam, Andhra Pradesh. She is working as a Lecturer in Dr. V. S. Krishna Govt. P. G. College, Visakhapatnam. She did her M. Phil on Tagore's 'Gitanjali' from Andhra University. She is doing Ph. D on 'Indian Spiritual Autobiographies in English' from A. U. She did PGDTE from CIEFL, Hyderabad. Her poems appear in various National and International journals. Her first anthology 'Gitabhivandanam-I & Mosaic' has won wide appreciation from many quarters. She has contributed articles on various literary issues to several journals. She has participated in several seminars and presented 3 national and 2 International seminar papers.

6. **Dr. M. B. Gaijan** has contributed a number of scholarly research papers to different books and journals. He has also presented his papers to various National and International seminars and conferences. His dectoral work is on "Dalit Literary Tradition in Gujarat". Gujarat Dalit Sahitya Akademi has accepted to publish his thesis. At present, he teaches English literature at Samaldas Arts College, Bhavnagar, Gujarat.

7. **Dr. Sunita Sinha** is a Senior Lecturer in the department of English at Women's College, Samastipur (Bihar). She has participated and presented her research papers in various seminars and conferences. Some of her scholarly research papers have been published in the leading

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journals and anthologies. She is also a Gold-Medallist in English.

8. **Dr. T. S. Ramesh** is a Lecturer in English at the Dept. of English, National College, Trichy. Some of his scholarly papers have been published on American, Indian and Commonwealth Literature. He has produced seven M. Phil, and some other scholars are pursuing their research for M. Phil and Ph. D. under his guidance.

9. **Dr. S. S. Bhandari** is a Reader in English at Govt. P. G. College, Pithoragarh in Uttranchal. He has contributed several of his research papers to standard journals and books. He has attended some National Seminars organized on various topics. He did his Ph. D. on the fictions of Bret Harte, an American novelist.

10. **Dr. Pathik Paramar** is a well-known figure in Gujarati writing. He is a poet and critic. Recently Gujarat State Govt. has offered him fifty thousand rupees for Sant Kabir Award. This award was given to him for upgrading and promoting the cause of Dalit issues and Dalit literature. He has to his credit eighteen books published. At present he is the Head of the Department of Gujarati Language and Literature at Kapadia Mahila College, Bhavnagar in the state of Gujarat.

11. **Dr. Rupalee Burke** teaches English at a local Commerce College in Ahmedabad and is visiting faculty at the Postgraduate Dept. of English, School of Language, Gujarat University. She publishes research articles regularly. She is an active translater, mainly from Gujarati into English. She has several publications of translation to her credit. She has been translating Gujarati Dalit Literature extensively. Her Gujarati translation of Girish Karnad's English play, *Tale-Danda* by the title *Shirraccheda* is noteworthy. Her area of interest includes dalit literature and discourse.

12. **Harish Jethaḅhai Manglam** is an editor, poet, novelist and short-story writer in Gujarat. His collection of poetry is *Prakamp* (1991). *Tirad* (1992) and *Choki*

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(1992) are his noteworthy novels. His other well-known books are *Samviti* (1987), *Vidit* (1989), *Bungio Vage* (1985), *Pratinidhi Dalit Varta* (1997), *Ghaṛ*—a Collection of Short-stories (1997), and *Dundubhi* (2000). Gujarat Sahitya Akademy (Gandhinagar) has awarded him for *Gujarati Dalit Varta* (edited, 1997).

13. **Dushyant B. Nimavat** teaches English at Grace Commerce College, Rajkot (Gujarat). He has contributed several research papers to a number of standard books and journals. He has also presented three papers in diffeent seminars and conferences. He has co-authored a book "Student's Companion to Literature". His other books are *Objective English Handbook* and *Critical Notes on 'As You Like It'*.

14. **Ami U. Upadhyay** works as a Lecturer of English at R. P. Bhalodia College at Rajkot, Gujarat. She participated in the workshop related to material production at U.G. level and presented a paper on "How to Teach Effectively at U.G. Level". She also presented her scholarly paper, "Poetry of Gieve Patel" at Mangrol in 1999. She has also contributed several research papers to different standard anthologies. Her paper "The Indian Spirit of Sarojini Naidu's Poetry" in the book *Indian Women Novelists in English* edited by Dr. Amar Nath Prasad is exhaustive and profound.

15. **Dr. Shibu Simon** who completed his higher studies in the universities of Kerala (M. A.), Madurai Kamraj (M. Ed. and M. Phil), Central Institute of English and Foreign Languages, Hyderabad (PGCTE and PGDTE), and Mahatama Gandhi (Ph.D) is presently working as a Reader in the P. G. Department of English at M. A. College Kothamangalam (Kerala). He is an approved research guide of Mahatama Gandhi University, Kottayam, based at its Regional Research Centre in English at Mar Athanasius College—the first College in Kerala to be accredited with 'A' Grade by NAAC of UGC. He is honoured as a member of the external faculty of central Institute of English and Foreign

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Languages, Hyderabad. Dr. Shibu who has published his research articles in leading journals and in books is also the recipient of U.G.C. research projects in Applied Linguistics.

16. **Sijo Varghese** is a Ph.D Research Scholar at M. G. University, Regional Research Centre in English, M. A. College, Kothamangalam, Kerala. He takes interest in contributing research papers to books and journals.

17. **Dr. Amar Nath Prasad** teaches English at P. G. Department of English, Rajendra College Campus, Jai Prakash University, Chapra (Bihar). He edits a biannual literary journal "Unheard Melody" in the month of January and July every year. He has authored five books, co-authored three books and edited and co-edited more than a dozen standard books of English literature covering the areas of Indian English Poetry, fiction and drama. He has also co-edited books on W. Wordsworth, John Keats and S. T. Coleridge. He has participated and read his research papers in various National and International seminars and conferences. Most of his poems have also been published in National and International anthologies. He co-edits the English biannual journal "Sloka" and a Hindi journal "Parijat".

18. **Satish Barbuddhe** teaches English at B. S. Patil College, Paratwada in the state of Maharashtra. He is a Lecturer in English. He has edited the book "Indian Literature in English: Critical views". He has attended and presented papers in several seminars and conferences. He has to his credit more than a dozen scholarly research papers published in different books and journals. At present, he is co-editing a book with Dr. Amar Nath Prasad on the plays of Vijay Tendulkar.

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1. Arundhati Roy's *The God of Small Things* : A Critical Exploration
2. Critical Essays
3. Indian Writing in English : Past and Present
4. Critical Response to R.K. Narayan
5. Recritiquing William Wordsworth (co-edited)
6. New Lights on Indian Women Novelists in English (in 3 volumes)

Dr. Prasad edits "Unheard Melody," a biannual literary journal of English literature. At present, he teaches English literature at P.G. Dept. of English, Rajendra College, J.P. University, Chapra (Bihar).

Dr. M. B. Gaijan teaches English at Samaldas Arts College, Bhavnagar, Gujarat. He has presen-ted his research papers in various National and International seminars and conferences. His papers have been pub-lished in the leading critical volumes. His doctoral work is on "Dalit Literary Tradition in Gujarat". Gujarat Dalit Sahitya Akademi has accepted to publish his thesis.

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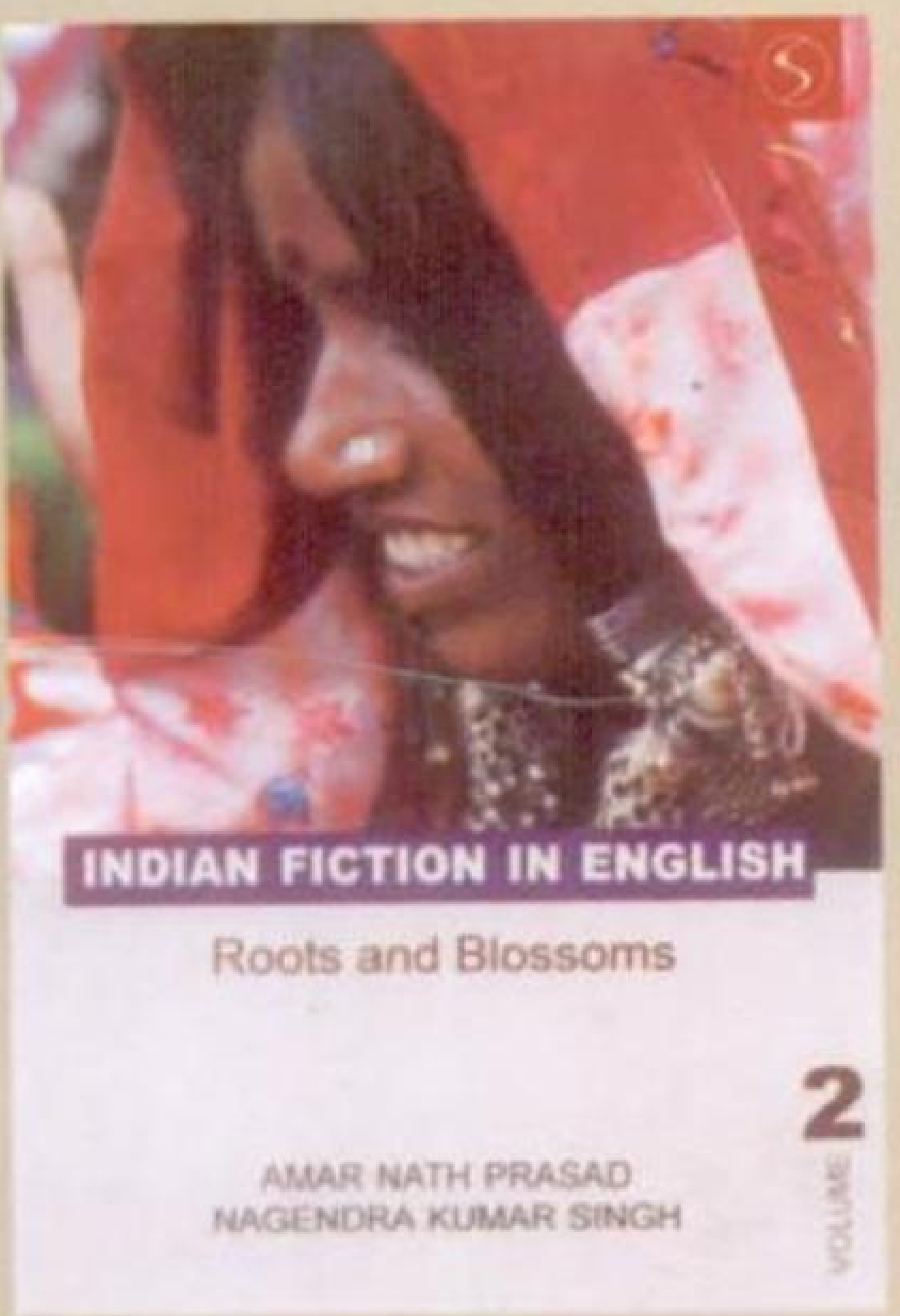

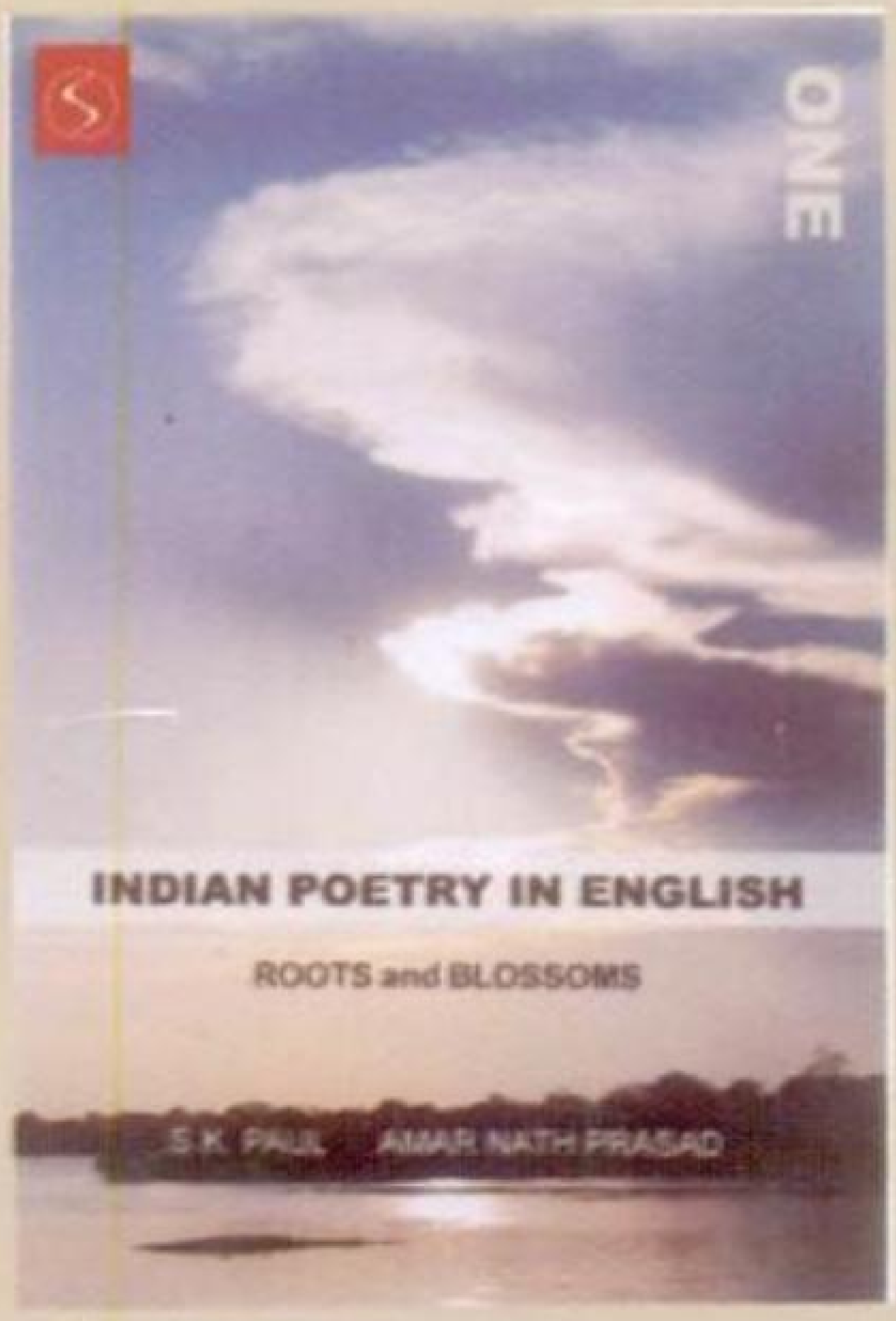

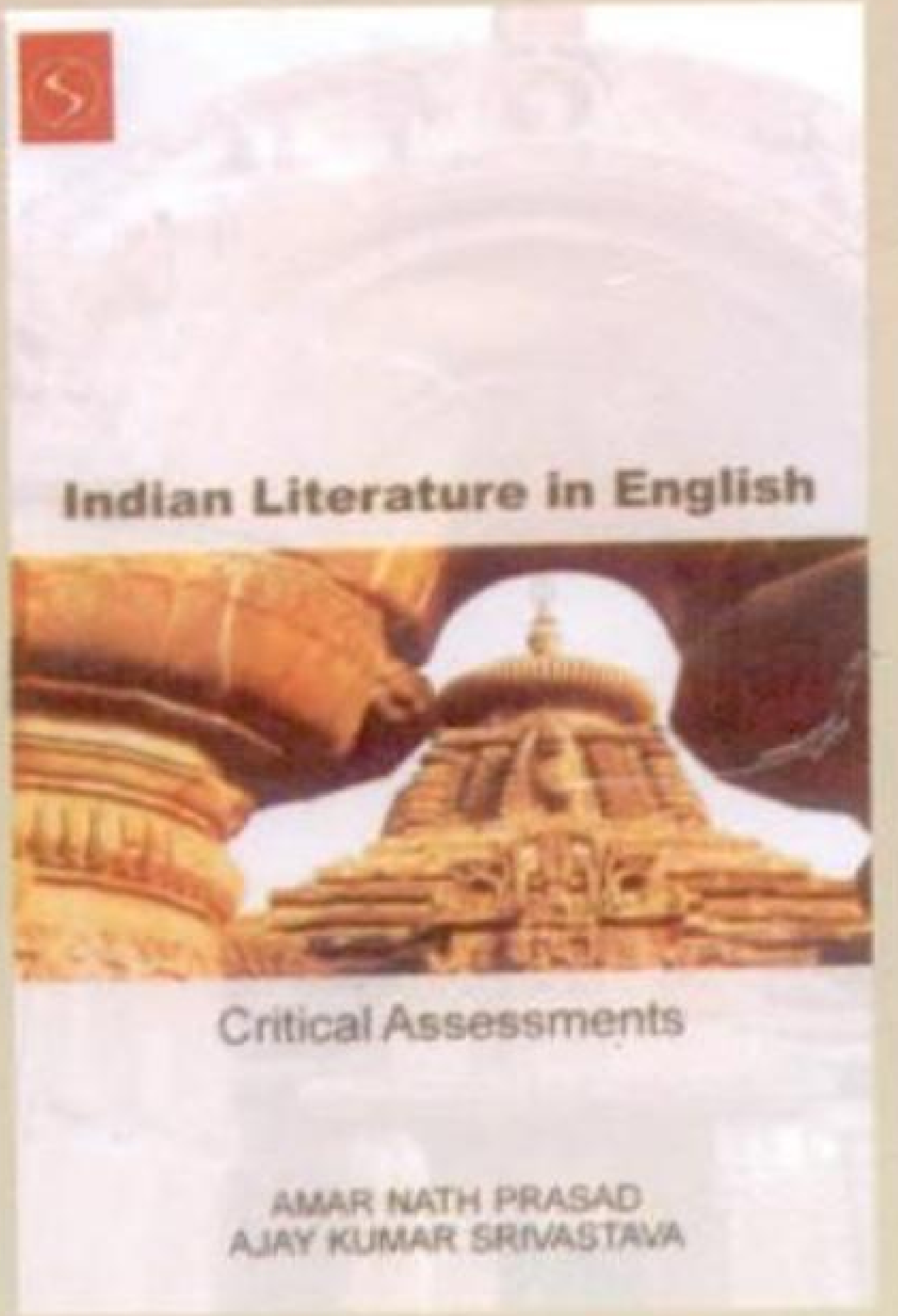

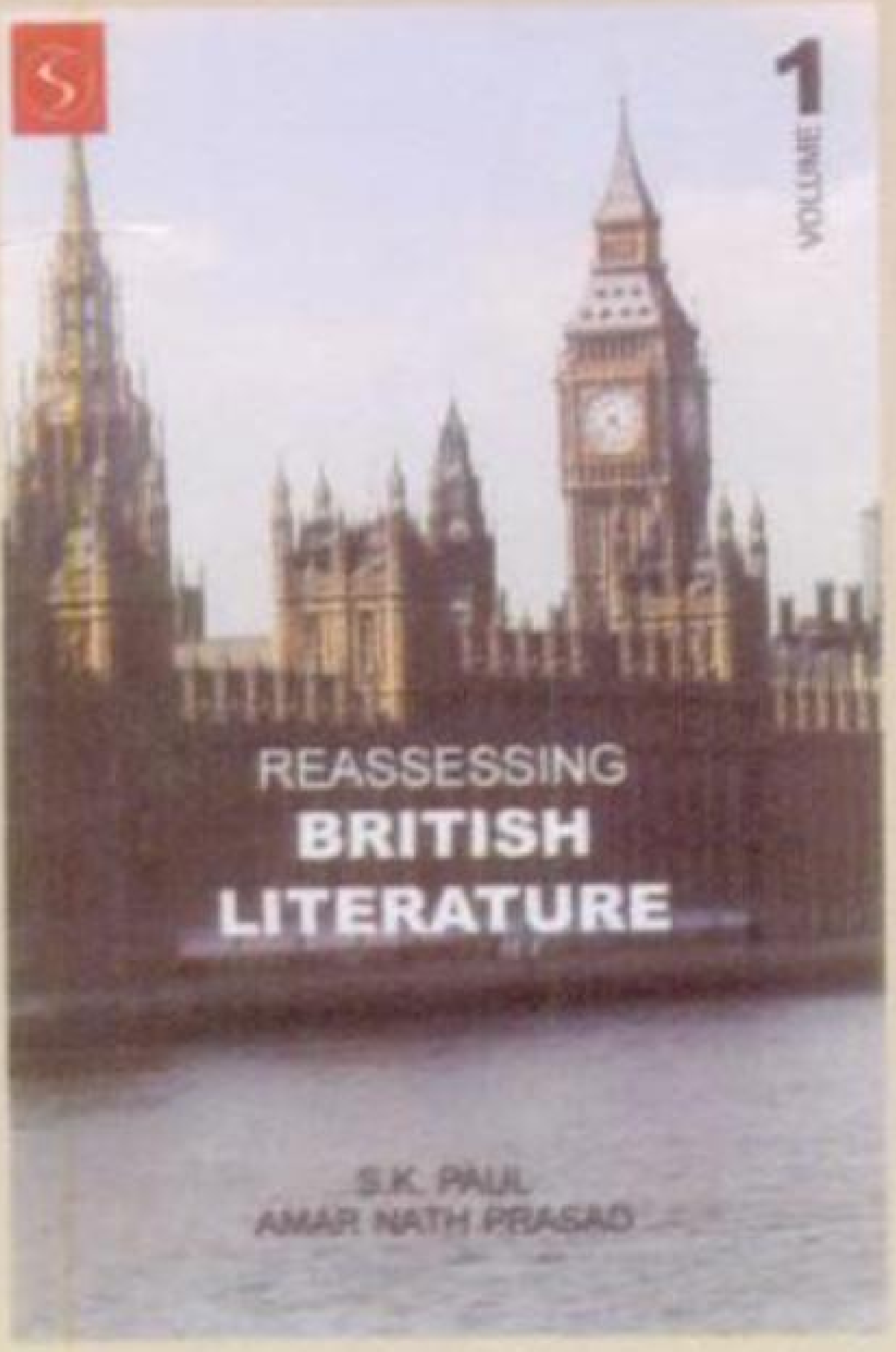

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